

A REPLY TO HARNACK
ON
THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY
BY
PROFESSOR HERMANN CREMER



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A reply to Harnack on the
essence of Christianity





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The Essence of Christianity

*Lectures Delivered in the Summer of 1901
Before Students of all Faculties in the
University of Greifswald*

✓ BY
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Translated from the Third German Edition

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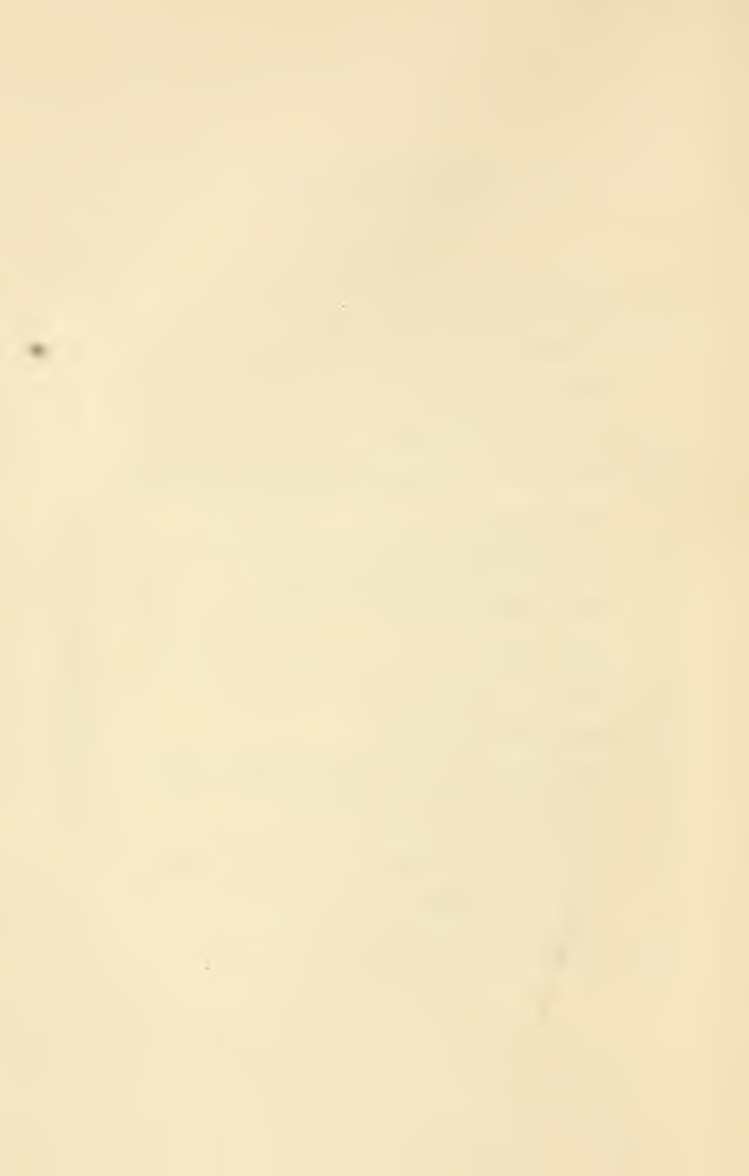
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE



THE author of these lectures, Hermann Cremer (born 1834), is well known to theological students by his "Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gräcität" (Gotha, 1866; 9th edition, 1902; English translation by W. Urwick: "Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek," Edinburgh, 1872; 3d edition, 1886). His theological standpoint is expressed in the dedication of these lectures to Pastor F. von Bodelschwingh, D.D., in Bethel, near Bielefeld, the promoter and founder of many institutions connected with the Inner Mission: "To thee, my dear brother, this work is dedicated to attest that one can only minister unto the poor and the wretched, unto the children and the aged, unto the sick and dying, and therefore only unto those that are whole, by representing before their eyes the Christ of the Bible, the Christ of the apostolic preaching, the Christ who came down from heaven and took upon Him our flesh and blood to die for us and to live for and with us. May one better understand the 'other Christ,' but one can only believe in that Christ in whom the children also believe."

Strange to say, Cremer's lectures have the same title as Harnack's, but here it is true: "Duo cum faciunt idem non est idem," and the fact that Cremer's lectures were issued within four months in three

editions shows that not all are prepared to accept Harnack's definition of Christianity with his "other Christ."

At the end of these lectures Cremer refers to a sentence of Harnack which is characteristic of the present situation: "How often in history is theology only the means to set aside religion." At the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth, rationalism had full sway in Germany. The high seats of Protestant theology were occupied by rationalists, whose aim was to unfit the theological students for the ministry. What did rationalism accomplish? Let us hear one of these teachers, Chr. F. Ammon, of Göttingen (died 1850). In a sermon which he delivered on January 1, 1801, he said: "Not enough that the temples are deserted; not enough that the Divine usages and rites, with which men as sensual beings will never be wholly able to dispense, have more than ever been lost out of the general interest; not enough, finally, that the churchly public spirit of the Christians, which once opposed hosts and overcame the forces of the most powerful states, have almost disappeared; even the belief in the most essential truths of religion has lost for very many its certainty and power; skepticism and indifference have taken its place; the spirit of devotion and of prayer, yea, even the idea of God and a future world, have become strange to whole families and to whole societies, and the present sensual disposition of mind need only to last yet a decade in order to turn over the entire future generation to the nameless misery which is inseparable from a ruling unbelief in religion."

The man who thus spoke was no pietist and no advocate of orthodoxy. He is afraid of the seven other spirits more wicked than the one which rationalism has cast out. Experience teaches that man can not live by negations; he wants something positive. "Inquietum est cor nostrum donec restat in te"; such was the experience of St. Augustine. Where this rest is found the Gospel plainly teaches. The question, What think ye of Christ? is the old, old question, and yet ever new. The contribution of the nineteenth century to the solution of this old question may be seen from my paper on the "Life-of-Jesus Literature in the Nineteenth Century," published in the *Homiletic Review* (New York, 1902, pp. 407-412, 504-509), and it is doubtful whether the present century, with its destructive tendency, will be able to bring anything new, when German, French, Dutch, and English writers have already exhausted their ingenuity. That which seemed to have satisfied one generation, another rejected; yea, the very authors of this or that theory changed their own systems, thus again verifying the saying:

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be.

And, as in the case of the life of Jesus, so it will be when the Gospels are reconstructed according to the conceptions of modern writers. It stands to reason that if the old Gospels, which stood the test of centuries and conquered the world, can not satisfy—otherwise they would need no reconstruction—the reconstructed Gospels will be less satisfactory. Will they

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lead to the confession of a Thomas : " My Lord and my God ? " *

In translating these lectures the aim has been to be faithful to the original text. Owing to the great subject which is here treated, a subject which concerns the salvation of man, the author has evidently avoided that elegance of diction which may captivate the mind but satisfies not the cravings of the soul and sends the heart empty away ; and, tho he spoke to students of the different faculties of the university, yet he spoke as a man to man, not in rhetorical flight, but with the courage of conviction culminating in the sentiment, terse but full of meaning : *Theologia crucis, Theologia lucis*.

B. P.

March, 1903

* A confession of which Professor Chase, of Cambridge, in his paper, " The Supernatural Element in the Lord's Earthly Life in Relation to Historical Methods of Study " (London, 1903), remarks : " It is the last word we need, but we need it all. ' My Lord ' will not do. We may call Him Lord, Lord, and yet do not the things which He says. ' Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord . . . and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. ' ' Lord ' gives right, but ' God ' gives power."

AUTHOR'S PREFACE



IN the year 1799 appeared Schleiermacher's "Discourses on Religion to the Cultured Among its Despisers," whom the rationalism of the eighteenth century had made what they were. In the winter of 1899-1900 Dr. Harnack delivered his lectures on the essence of Christianity, in which he practically leads back to the views of the eighteenth century. Schleiermacher had to deal with an estrangement from the Gospel through the fault of rationalism; Harnack, with an estrangement from Christianity through the fault of the attestation of the Gospel itself—the Gospel, in short, of the Bible and the Reformation. For not only the doctrines developed by theology with more or less skill, but the most essential traits of the New Testament Gospel, are the causes he assigns for unbelief among the cultured. On this account he presents another Gospel, nominally obtained by way of historical criticism, which neither rests upon historical criticism nor is a Gospel for sinners. His supposition is not an historical but a dogmatical proposition—namely, that a person like the Christ of the New Testament preaching is an impossibility. From this proposition he construes, again from dogmatical reasons, what in the New Testament history, and equally in the New Testament prediction, respectively, should be correct or admissible, and thus he brings about a dogmatic conception which he calls

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historical, and from which he now also estimates the New Testament history in doctrine and life of the Church. That this estimate as well as his criticism of the New Testament account would prove otherwise if the first proposition read differently is indeed obvious to him.

Accordingly, it was my task to examine how the New Testament knowledge of Jesus Christ originated, to delineate its contents, and thus to prove the truth as, according to my conviction, it can only be proved. I have avoided, after the example of others, entering into the defect of the general religious suppositions of Harnack. The things old and new about the Lord Christ, His relation to us and our relation to Him, of which I have spoken, Christendom must judge, for I desire to have nothing to myself in my belief. Aside from changes made necessary in the verbal order and some eliminations and additions, due to a regard for the difference between the written and spoken word, the lectures remain as they were delivered.

H. C.

GREIFSWALD, *September 6, 1901*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

N the controversy with Harnack the question is, whether the Christianity of the apostolic message is right, or whether it must be replaced by a Christianity of modern reflection and still more modern enthusiasm. The Christianity of the apostolic message applies to the lost sinner, to whom it offers salvation through the wondrous grace of God, who became our brother in Christ Jesus. Harnack's Christianity applies to the modern man who feels himself vexed, not by the moral but by the intellectual problem, because the moral problem, How is the sinner saved? does not exist for him. For him Christianity is also a paradox, unexpected, it is true, but thoroughly rational; for us it is an actual paradox, a contradiction to all logical and moral sequence, and yet the truth. It follows that we must choose between the two. To assist in this choice it is hoped that, with the help of God, this book will contribute.

H. CREMER

GREIFSWALD, *May* 26, 1903



A REPLY TO HARNACK

ON

The Essence of Christianity

I

WHICH CHRISTIANITY?

WHAT is Christianity? What does it want? What does it offer? What does it require? What does it accomplish? How find answers to these questions? We do not care to know what this one or that one thinks of Christianity, nor yet what this one or that one passes off as Christianity, but what Christianity really is, what it really gives to us, what claims it actually makes. How are we to find this out? One might almost despair when, with this question in the heart, he looks at Christendom divided into opposite camps. The Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, and the Protestant Church with all its denominations, say to us: Here is Christ! here is Christianity! They all call themselves Christians, after the One man, for whom His attributive name, "Christ"—*i.e.*, the Anointed, the King—has become a proper name. They all lay claim to us and ask us to join them, but they all are against each other, and accuse each other not only of error, but even of apostasy, of falsehood. How and whereby are we, then, to know who is right?

The question is not important merely to every one who in order to formulate an independent opinion

wishes to get information concerning this force which moves the world ; it is necessary (for this they all assert) because, without an exception, we all need Christianity, and Christianity itself comes everywhere and in every form with the claim to exist for every one, to be necessary to every one, that his life may have something of value for time and eternity.

We on our part reject from the start every tendency which will release us from the duty, and therefore also from the right, of free investigation of the truth and free decision for the truth, and which demands only an obedient attachment to the communion that stands before and above the individual, the Church, as having decided long ago what the truth is. As if, in spite of the conviction living in the Church or in any communion, the individual had not to come first to the same conviction of truth in order to belong inwardly to the communion or be able to work in reforming it! In this protest we formally stand on the ground of the Reformation and of Protestantism. But in this we are not yet materially one with the churches of the Reformation and with that which is regarded in them as the essence of Christianity. By the same way the same result must first be obtained, if it can be obtained at all. Have the churches of the Reformation obtained this result? Have they perceived the essence of Christianity? Do they represent it? Do they declare it? Or have they and their members only opinions about Christianity—one this opinion, another that, but none of them the reality?

Aside from the consideration that these churches not only in common oppose Catholicism and papacy,

but among themselves have also opposed each other most vehemently, and in part still oppose, it is more to the point to consider that we stand at present in the midst of a hotter and more serious battle. With the exception, perhaps, of the conflicts of the early Christian centuries and of the Reformation, the present controversy is the severest that has ever been waged. We battle for the person and importance of Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed, we fight a battle in which no truce is possible. Victory for either side necessarily means the destruction of the other. It is the battle of one religion with another religion. The one regards Christ as a natural phenomenon of history, appearing in the normal course of history, who worked and still works like every other important man, only that He surpasses all others in power; who in a singular and perfect fidelity to His trust has put His gifts and the knowledge of God acquired in connection with them and the understanding of the world obtained by Him into such relations with motives and objects that He alone solves the mysteries of our life and of the existence of the world, and shows a blessed goal for them both. We are to see in Christ the man in whom the good has become a reality in the world, and this realization of the good is to keep us from despair as we attempt such realization also. In looking to Divine Providence, which has called such a man into existence, we are to be assured of the forgiveness or pardon of our errors, our sins; shown thereby we are to enjoy this knowledge of God which we thus acquire, and by faith in this deed of God to strive after the like realization of the good.

Thus the one. The other religion regards Christ as an entirely irregular appearance in history, as a man indeed like ourselves, partaking of our flesh and blood, who became our life's comrade, our brother, whose complete identification with our race is a matter of certainty, and who by this membership in our race, for our benefit first became everything that He was—no, not was, but is. The meaning of His life and nature is unique, not merely because it belongs to no other individual man, but because it does not appertain to the race of man as such. It does not belong to Him because He is man come out from our race, but because He *became* man, *entered into* our race; He existed before He became man, He was and is God in eternal manner, and forever He united Himself with us and our race, as only He can do it, who is God and Lord over all, and thus became our brother, who shares everything with us, our misery, our judgment, that everything that He is may redound to our benefit.

According to the religion first named, Christ is a man like ourselves, fully and completely and only a man, nothing else, only distinguished by His very prominent, spiritually moral gifts, whereby He worked Himself up to a perfect communion with God, showed Himself to be in full and blessed independence of the world, and proved His religious and moral highness in a unique domination of the world, so that the suffering also which was inflicted upon Him could not destroy the peace of His religious and moral attitude toward God and the brethren. Thus He was a man without an equal, inviting us to an indefatigable emu-

lation, but a man whom, without deceiving ourselves, we can not even follow in the initial steps. For we all have to deal with sin, and, indeed, with our sin, with the sin in us, as He did not, and on this account our task compared to His is not realizable. But on the other hypothesis He is the God-man, whose incarnation and humanity is a humiliation continuing itself unto death and down into the realm of the dead, that in the deepest depths of our misery we should not be deprived of the sympathizing Man of Pity and Savior.

Of these two contrasted faiths, which, then, is right?

It is felt more and more, tho not always clearly perceived, that we can not avoid this question nor superciliously postpone its answer, as that Roman once did who was to pass the sentence on Christ. The jesting attitude that it is impossible to know and to say what is truth, what in the last analysis can alone claim to be reality and authority, is no longer possible. Our life not only loses in value when the so-called religious interest expressing itself in the search for truth is not and can not be satisfied; but we have lived, cared, worked, fought, suffered entirely in vain if we are obliged to walk our way without an answer to this question. We are then nothing but an incomprehensible play of the waves rushing onward in the vast sea. Rather not to be at all than to live to no purpose and without aim, to live a life which for itself is hardly worth the while to be lived, except in view of something beyond it, for which we are here and whither we hope through Christ to come! Before we resign ourselves to that view, let us endeavor by all means to find the truth. We have the truth by

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having Christ. We have Christ only when we have Him as He actually is; otherwise we have Him not, in spite of all our opinions about Him. On this account the question concerning the truth is very closely connected with the question concerning Christ, concerning the Messiah, concerning Christianity and its essence. Let the decision be what it may, here it must be made.

But how are we to make the inquiry in order to reach the decision, to discover the truth concerning Christ, to find truth itself? Whence are we to find out what, on the whole, is real, true Christianity? One says: "Believe in Christ." Yes, what shall I believe of Him? Or shall I believe nothing of Him, only believe in Him? Or only believe Him? What is it to believe? What did Christ intend? What has He done? One says: "This is an historical question, at least this last question as to what He intended and did, and as an historical question it can only be solved by way and with the means of historical inquiry." That it is from one aspect an historical question is true, but it is questionable whether it is *merely* an historical question, and whether it is to be answered by the ordinary means of other historical inquiry. For the question concerning that which Christ did and whereby He worked is closely connected with the question whether we now live in and by the after-effects which are called forth by His person and His activity, or whether He works even now and will continue to work? It is right to distinguish between the present appearance of Christianity and its first appearance in history. It is also right to be referred to this very first appearance, to the form in which Christian-

ity has gained its first victories, when the question as to the essence of Christianity is raised. Where Christianity gained the victory over the world we must look for signs of the power by which the victory was won. There, if anywhere, the essence of this world-historical phenomenon will come out the purest, and there will gush forth for all time the fountain of youth from which it can renew itself; for all manifestations in the world are maintained by the forces of their beginning. We must thus go back to the time of the beginning. But—*where lies the time of the beginning of Christianity?*

This is the first great question which we must answer. Is the appearance and work of the person of Jesus Christ the time of the beginning of Christianity? And is *Christianity the religion which Jesus has practised*, which He has attested, to whose practise and attendance He has invited men and shown them the way, a fire which by His preaching He has kindled in the hearts of His hearers? Are we to regard the Christianity of Christ, as it has been called, as that in which the essence of Christianity has come out with firstness and with original power? *Or is the power which proceeds from Christ and to-day yet produces Christianity something else than the religion which He Himself practised?* We see already that the question as to the time of the beginning of Christianity leads us to the most serious difficulties. Were Christianity the religion which Christ Himself had practised we stand almost helpless in presence of the sources on which our inquiry depends; for, tho we obtain a clear insight into His own religious life, into His faith, His prayer,

His walk in the law of God, that which the Gospels record as the principal thing about Jesus is not this, but that which He does for us and whereby He lives and suffers for men. Our sources are actually the oldest attestations of Christianity, of the Christian message, which we have. This is a generally acknowledged fact with regard to our New Testament writings wholly aside from the question as to the credibility of their contents. But now these very writings show in Christ anything but a founder of religion. When Christianity is called after Him, it is not because—according to these sources—He has practised and announced this religion first. He proclaims the Father, before whom He walks Himself, and on whom He Himself believes, and He also opens the access unto the Father, not by His teaching, not by His example, but by His death, by the forgiveness of our sins, which He effects. Thus, altho He is what we are, yet He stands in a different relation to the Father than we. He is our brother, who works for us, to whom we owe everything ; not the brother who has nothing else for Himself but His brethren. What He has we are to have, what we have He will share ; He shares our sin and guilt without having guilt ; we are to have the forgiveness which He has purchased for us. *He is not, like ourselves, a subject of religion ; on the contrary, He is the object of the religion, the object of Christianity.* He is not—again according to our sources—a man of history, a man who once *was* like others, whose importance is to be understood from that which they have been for their time and from their after-effects. We hear nothing of after-effects of Jesus, only of

effects, and indeed of effects which after His earthly history He exerts from his present place, from the place of God beyond this world—from heaven. This is not the point of view from which that is regarded which is otherwise called after-effects, in speaking of Socrates, of Plato, of Luther, of Goethe. It is a real activity of Christ from heaven such as is not possible to any of the blessed, to the righteous made perfect. What is recorded of Christ's earthly activity is only the beginning, the actual tenor and aim of his activity; He now only unfolds. As to this, something is indeed said of Him which has not and can not have its equal in all history. Are we to eliminate it, on this account, from the very start as unhistorical, and treat everything which is reported to us of this activity of Jesus in accordance with the canon that, correctly considered, there can not be present effects but only after-effects—historical effects of Jesus?

To this must be further added the deeds which Jesus did on earth, which otherwise do not and can not take place on historical soil, in accordance with the natural construction of things—His miracles, and also the miracles which were wrought on Him: His birth, His endowment with the Spirit of God beyond measure, His transfiguration, His resurrection and ascension. How are we to know the authenticity of the writings or of the testimonies which we have concerning Him and His history and importance? Are we to eliminate all this miraculous element as incredible? The New Testament writings are the documents of the first annunciation of Christianity which we have. Shall we say that already when

these documents appeared, Christ was no more understood ; that through the first apostolic proclamation a garland of legends had been wound around His head which we must resolutely tear away in order that only the historical may remain? And what, then, is really historical in each of these unique phenomena? Or shall we take everything for granted that is said of Him, and with it acknowledge a record and a character that stand absolutely alone in history? Every criticism of our sources, be it of this or that kind, is not only an historical but a dogmatical criticism—Harnack criticizes these sources just as dogmatically as others who do not share his standpoint, only that he, protected by the authority of his great name, designates his dogmatical critique historical.

If we are to begin by distinguishing and eliminating everything which goes beyond the measure of the human, let us also understand that Christianity will then have an entirely different face from that which it actually has in our New Testament writings, and that the religion in which the Christ of the New Testament is the object of faith is entirely different from the religion whose first, most prominent, and most effective subject is Jesus considered merely as a man. We have, then, to deal with different religions—with the religion of the New Testament and with the religion that results from the foregoing kind of criticism.

To this there is to be added yet another fact. There is really a difference, tho no opposition and no dispute, between the Gospel which Jesus has proclaimed and the Gospel concerning Jesus as the disciples have proclaimed it and by means of which they overcame

the world. It was not Jesus' proclamation that founded Christianity in the world, but the proclamation of the disciples about Jesus. Jesus Himself accomplished nothing until His death. Never, perhaps, has a life ended so unsuccessful as the life of Jesus. Even His disciples, who had been with Him and about Him all the time, and had retained their hope in Him till the night in which He was betrayed, finally abandoned belief in Him. Only His resurrection could bring back their belief, now become a faith of a different kind—firmer, more joyous, more unswerving, more certain of victory; but how small are even these effects that immediately followed the resurrection compared with those which the disciples later proclaimed! Let us only be reminded how the apostle (I. Corinthians xv) enumerates the appearances of the risen Savior, and how an entirely new and different result is attained by Peter's pentecostal preaching (Acts ii). Only the Gospel of Jesus, as the disciples have preached it, had, as we should say, an effect. To their preaching Christianity owes its existence as a world-historical phenomenon.

To this proclamation, however, we owe entirely our knowledge about Jesus, His appearance, His activity, His fate, so that we can say that all documents which we have concerning Him reduce themselves to the preaching of the disciples. All New Testament writings are documentary vouchers of the first fundamental preaching of Christ. They mediate to us the knowledge of His history by declaring the understanding of that history and of its importance. This also holds good of the Epistle to the Hebrews,

which, according to chapter ii: 3, was written by a disciple of the apostles, and thereby testifies unto us of the belief in the importance of the person and history of Jesus which lived in the congregations founded by the apostles. Now this apostolic or New Testament preaching contains for every historian, whose object is the investigation and exhibition of the spiritual life-movement of humanity, a series of the most critical, most exceptional moments. The whole history of Jesus is a history without comparison, going far beyond everything which legend, the mythology of nations, has shaped. On the one hand, it is the history of a man who lived, felt, suffered humanly as only one could humanly live, feel, and suffer, who has entered into the fate of the noblest of all times—namely, to be rejected and killed. So only can one conceive it. And, on the other hand, it is a history commencing with a miracle not having its equal, interblended with miracles such as none of the servants of God have ever performed, and in its earthly course closing again with a miracle not having its equal. Such a history, so completely different from any other part of known history, stands, so far, unhinged from the historical life of humanity. The events or happenings, however, which make it a history beyond comparison are so insolubly connected with Christianity—at least, with that Christianity to which in our query we must first of all go back—that either must stand or fall with the other. Shall we now say that this union of history and religion is only the product of the conception which Jesus found among his disciples? Have the disciples, as children of their time, by means of the

ideas received by them from the age they lived in, made from the Gospel of Jesus a Gospel *concerning* Jesus? And should it, therefore, be necessary to go back to the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus Himself in order to find what real Christianity is according to that? But where have we this Gospel proclaimed by Jesus? After what critical standard are we to reconstruct it? For only by a reconstruction could we restore it. And after we had reconstructed it, would we not also have to distinguish in the preaching of Jesus between the transient and lasting, between the form of his thoughts belonging to His people and His time and the everlasting tenor expressed in contemporaneous form? Are, for instance, the discourses and sayings of Jesus which refer to His second coming genuine or spurious? And when genuine, have they still the same value to-day or not? Jesus speaks of angels as of something real, of their interest in our destiny, of their ministry at the end of time, when the wicked shall be separated from the righteous. Is He right?

In the Tübingen school the apostle Paul was regarded as the actual creator of Christianity as a world-religion. Now he is regarded as the one who, in spite of his great success, yes, perhaps because of the same, is said to have tempered the Christian preaching in the strongest manner with thoughts and ideas of Jewish religious speculation, so that he no more distinguished between religion and theology. Christ alone is the real author of Christianity; from His preaching only can be seen what Christianity actually should be and effect; according to it we can estimate what it became and what it can be, when it is clearly set forth. It

depends on this pure comprehension of His preaching, what He actually said, what He meant to say, and not that which tradition makes Him say, nor that in which there is mere adaptation to the ideas of His people. Thus we could only come to the knowledge of true Christianity by an energetic critical labor. Such labor can, of course, only be undertaken by science. To the labor and results of science we are thus directed with our desire for knowledge and understanding of what Christianity is. Science only is to give us the real and true religion. And yet every one, even the commonest man, has not only the most urgent interest to find out what Christianity is; he has also the faculty to decide for himself, without the help of science, whether or not in that which offers itself to him as religion he finds God and God's grace; if the religion which Jesus practised, proclaimed and demanded comes forth so effectively in the Gospel of Jesus, and is so clearly recognizable that, in spite of all veilings, obscurations, and pollutions, it yet exercises its power to this day, so that, as far as our question is concerned, it only depends on a proper setting forth of this, its power, free from all accessory appearances and additions. Harneck has distinguished between "powers" and "props" in this matter of comprehending truth. The distinction is especially flattering to the semiculture of our times. We, the cultured ones, have the "powers"; the remainder of mankind reach up to it only by means of the "props." Is the Gospel to be understood only by the cultured? We need to have this contrast only uttered to feel it as the frivolous boasting of a so-called aristocracy of cul-

ture, especially in matters of religion, which every one, no matter what his position, must be able to understand, or religion is a palpable absurdity.

Our present task, that we are to perform for those who are not able to do it, is to strip the real Gospel of all the Jewish and theological covers which encase it, proclaim the pure Gospel thus obtained to our whole people, and effect by it at last the purification and completion of the Reformation, commenced, indeed, in the sixteenth century, but now stuck fast for want of courage and knowledge. But it is indeed a question whether the difference between "powers" and "props" (tho it covers a theory that is intolerable in matters of religious life and the religious communion) will ever cease. But suppose we have the task we have named, including the task of completing the Reformation or are accomplishing a new Reformation, who has hitherto spoken the redeeming word? Who has given us the reconstructed, genuine Gospel? Ritschl or Herrmann? Holtzmann or Baldensperger? or even Harneck? But, in fact, we have not that task. The *apostolic preaching* of the Gospel not merely contains but *is* truly the eternal Gospel. There remains, indeed, a difference between the orthodox and liberal, a difference which only the coming of Him will remove from the world who once asked: Howbeit when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?

Let us revert to a fact already alluded to, which hitherto has not been sufficiently appreciated—namely, the unity of the New Testament testimony with regard to all that it says of the person, work, destiny, activity of Jesus, and of the importance of

Jesus to us. The New Testament writings are by different authors and show many differences—whether explicable or not, we have here not to investigate. The synoptic account of the appearance of Jesus differs from the Johannean account, the one being a record of the teachings, deeds, and destinies of the miraculously born man Jesus, who died on the cross, and rose again after three days, and the other a history of one who was primarily the shadowing forth of the Logos, the Word made flesh. Think also of the Jewish Christianity of James's epistle and of the Apocalypse on the one hand, the Jewish Christianity of the Epistle to the Hebrews on the other hand, and add to these the Gentile Christian Gospel as Paul proclaimed and represented it. But in spite of every supposed or real difference, all the New Testament writings agree in that which they say of the mystery of the Christ's person, of the importance of His destiny for us, and of the everlasting significance of His person, the matters which decide our eternal destiny, and that of the whole world's. Had there existed a difference in this respect—*e.g.*, between Paul and James—it were out-and-out inconceivable, especially inconceivable in the Jewish Christian James, that it is not even mentioned, let alone that it should not have come into the foreground. The oldest appellation of the Christians, which is evidently of Jewish origin, reads: "They that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." They are thus people who pray to Jesus. They consider, therefore, Jesus, and, indeed, the Crucified and Risen One, as one who is God and Lord. The Christians on their part accept this designation in spite of the accen-

tuation of the unity of God, in which they fully agree with Israel. Thus they are called in the Acts of the Apostles and also by Paul. Could it be conceivable that a Jewish Christian, like the author of James's Epistle, should not have opposed, in the name of the Jews and in the name of Israelitish monotheism, such a deification of man if it had been the sign of the original Jewish Christianity not to regard Jesus as God and not to pray to him? No; the difference, which for a time really existed in the apostolic circle, until it was determined and overcome, did not at all concern the person of Christ, nor the importance of His work, His suffering, death, and resurrection for us. It concerned merely a question of missionary practise, which might indeed be a fundamental question, ultimately connected with the importance of Christ and His work for us, but which was first of all a question of missionary practise. It was the question whether the members of the Gentile world could have part in the Gospel without first becoming members of Israel's communion; whether the Divine election which Israel enjoyed had now turned to the Gentiles after Israel had shown itself unbelieving. It was firmly settled that we can only partake of the salvation by the free Divine election, that there exists no natural right to salvation or redemption. But it was not yet clearly known that Israel's election had actually come to naught until the time when the Gentiles should be converted. (The law was still regarded as the condition under which the believers became partakers of the grace of redemption, without understanding that the law without exception denied the salvation to every Israelite.) *But*

of a Jewish Christianity, which in the fundamental questions concerning the person and importance of Jesus Christ had differed from the apostolic predication, we hear nothing during the actual apostolic time. This only belongs to a much later time.

In thus obtaining a unitary aspect of the New Testament authors with regard to the person and importance of Jesus, we must place before ourselves the consensus of their affirmation in connection with the view of Christ Himself as stated by them. We must then consider the difficulties which stand in our way in acknowledging this as an actual Gospel, and we must answer the question as to what picture of Christ and His views is now set over against it to demand acknowledgment, and then decide the question accordingly—What is really the eternal Gospel? Only in this way shall we see whether we have the true Gospel in the apostolic representation and in the representation of the evangelists, or whether we are obliged to look away from these, and attempt to discriminate the eternal content of the Gospels by minute critical processes.

II

THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE



LET us begin with the apostolic message of Christ. God has charged us (says Peter, in the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius) to preach unto the people, and to testify that this Jesus, whom His people betrayed, whom the Gentiles crucified, and whom God raised up the third day, is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins (Acts x : 42, 43). That He is crucified is the sin of Israel, who became the traitor and murderer of Jesus ; and yet did this happen after God's premeditated counsel and will. For this, till then the greatest of all sins, the rejection of the Messiah bringing grace and salvation, God allowed, and He reckoned not unto the world its trespass—this sin and all sin that was done before and is connected with it—that we should have in Him who was crucified the forgiveness of all sins. Redemption, forgiveness of sins, and with it deliverance from judgment and perdition are offered to us in Him. Till then the sin of the whole world had remained under Divine patience. Now comes the day when it is finished, and must, therefore, be visited upon the sinner. It is finished, indeed, but—it is not visited. No hand withereth which was lifted up against the Holy One of God ; no mouth

groweth dumb which has derided Him. Jesus dies under the hands of His enemies, and not even one of his disciples steps in for Him. They are all offended in Him, as He prophesied to them. It must needs be that Jesus should die, He would rather die than judge the world, and He must die—die that the world should not be condemned.

From that hour there is forgiveness of all sins. On this account Paul saith that he knew nothing, and is determined not to know anything, save Jesus, and Him crucified ; that in Jesus Christ we have forgiveness of sins through His blood ; that we are redeemed through His blood. John saith that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin, and thus frees us from all guilt ; that Jesus Christ, the righteous, is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Paul and John both say that in this Jesus who was crucified for us, whom God raised up, the love of God has been manifested toward us so greatly and wondrously that God even commends and praises it. Peter, however, saith : “ Know that ye were redeemed from your vain, superficial manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” But of His resurrection he saith : “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Thus Jesus, who was betrayed, rejected, deserted, and given up even by His disciples, is praised by

them as Christ. He is, indeed, the Christ through His sufferings, death, and resurrection. In this power to remit sin lies His importance as Christ. By this has He redeemed us. He has supplied us with the forgiveness of sin, so that we may now actually experience *it*. Not only *according to* but *through* that forgiveness is He the Christ, the King of the Kingdom of God, appointed and instituted by God as the redeemer and helper of all those who hope in Him. On Him who was crucified, whom God has raised up, but who forever has on Him the marks of that which He has experienced from us, as He is forever the same, whom God has justified by the resurrection from death—on Him we are to believe, Him we are to know and acknowledge as the Lord and Judge, Redeemer and Savior, given to us by God, and ourselves as His redeemed ones. Through the blood of the cross He made peace, on the cross He blotted out the handwriting which testified and testifies against us. Not the life which Jesus lived saves us, but the death which He suffered and toward which His whole life pressed. How was this possible? How is this to be known?

In the case of other friends who served us and were of profit to us throughout their lives, through whose service we derived something of our own life, and were in turn built up to be something to others—they seem to be torn from us by death. We ever feel the blank which the death of our beloved leaves in our life. The death of our parents, teachers, friends never enriches us. We most keenly feel this effect of death at the departure of the great—statesmen, poets, and

thinkers—to whom we looked up, to whose words we listened, whose thoughts guided us, whose instructions we followed. It happens, indeed, that after their departure that part of them wanes which belongs to the perishing flesh ; that that is forgotten which one likes to forget in order not to darken the picture, and which rancorous jealousy or selfish uncharitableness, which can not endure a great man, alone preserves. Untroubled by all which belongs to his limitations, yes, even to his sinfulness, the picture of him whom we have gratefully known and still revere comes before us. We rejoice when his importance is perceived in ever wider circles, and the after-effects of his activity and the work of his life take ever more comprehensive shapes. But always it is only the memorial picture of our departed friend which abides with us and which we enjoy.

But with Jesus it is otherwise. In the case of other friends, death is always felt as the hard blow which we must accept without being able to prevent it. We are deprived of our best friends, and we reflect that all the glory of men, our own not excepted, must sink into the grave, which gives nothing back. But it was otherwise with Christ. For a short time, indeed, till the third day, the disciples thought that everything was lost. They had precious recollections of Him, but recollections which transfigured not to them His picture, but only filled them with the deepest sorrow over their lost master—not only lost, but one whom they themselves had given up. But then a day came which no one had expected, a day beginning with terror, but which turned all their fear into unspeak-

able joy, and convinced them that nothing was lost ! Everything is gained ! The greatest wonder possible, forgiveness of all sins, through God's eternal mercy, is acquired for us ! Streams of life spring out from Golgotha through the world ; He, the crucified, has saved us ; He died, but His death, of which we are the cause, burdens us not, but rather sets us free ; He died that we may have forgiveness of our sins !

How was this possible ? Whence did the disciples know that ? How would they make this clear to the world, to the whole world, and thus also to us ? How would they convince Jews and Gentiles that at all times they might find forgiveness only in the blood of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ ; that in the blood of Christ the forgiveness of *all* their sins is really to be found ? Was it possible, perhaps, to convince those whose evil work it had been to compass the death of Jesus that this death, the death of the most innocent of all martyrs, will either burden them forever with unpardonable guilt, or save them, if they only remember his patient sacrifice, and are led to repentance ? But no ; this sin was, after all, too great. All blood shed unjustly could be forgiven, but not this. The offense was so heavy that it always asserted itself anew with new power, even tho one had for a time given himself up to allaying thoughts. It could not be removed by endeavoring to consider the death of Jesus under new points of view. The guilt of the disciples, their offense at His death on the cross, was still greater than the sin of the people who had been persuaded to ask for Barabbas and to reject Jesus with the cry : "Crucify, crucify Him !" Their sin was

greater even than that of the rulers of the people who had judged him. They had known Jesus as none of the others, and yet they had given him up! None remained faithful to him; none had confessed: He is nevertheless the Messiah! Tho He is crucified, He is the Messiah still! How, then, should they arrive at the thought that not only is the sin of the world forgiven, but all *their* sin? True that Jesus said on the evening before His death, when He instituted the Lord's Supper: "This is my body, my blood, given and shed for you for the remission of sin"; but did this also include that sin which was the crown and climax of all the sins that otherwise they had sinned against Jesus? Merely their thoughts could not give them the remission of sin. There must be the reality, the actual remission, the very taking away of their real guilt, the real not-reckoning of their actual sin. How was it possible to obtain the conviction of the blotting out of all their guilt through Christ's death on the cross, through the blood of the cross?—a fact which we afterward hear testified, nevertheless, from their own mouths.

There can be but one answer: They had experienced the forgiveness, this incredible thing, as reality. Wonderful it must indeed be, yet is it really and actually forgiveness of their sins. For the first time something had taken place which had never thus before taken place since the foundation of the world. Christ Jesus, crucified, dead, and buried, had risen. Not like the dead whom He once raised and gave back to their own; He was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father. Not by His *creative* word by

which He called the world into existence, but by His *redeeming* word. Unto the deepest depth of misery and death Christ had become like us, and weak and helpless He descended into the world of the dead. There it turned out that the cords of death could not hold Him. The condition of death was removed by the power of God, who is mightier than the power and might of all men. It is precisely through the death of His Son that God proves Himself the living God, not to be prevented by all the devices of men from executing His will—above all, His will of love toward men. He who was buried left His grave for the sake of His brethren, for their benefit. This was the Divine justification which fell to His lot. He was right, the whole world was wrong. It could not even accomplish what it otherwise does to every one whom it can not tolerate—deliver Him to death once for all. Its power reached to the cross and the sepulcher, but no further. Jesus rose from death, and went to His brethren to salute them with His salutation of peace.

The first impression that His appearance made was terror and fright. It could not have been otherwise. The women that had come to anoint His body—this was indeed the only thing which they could do, and was at the same time a sign that they too had lost their *faith*—fled from the grave. They felt as if the great day of God's judgment had come over the world. The disciples that walked with Him down to Emmaus said: "Certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb, and when they found not His body they came, saying that they had also 'seen a vision of angels which said that He was

alive.' " But when Jesus Himself appears unto them, when He comes to them unimpeded through closed doors, a Lord full of power and glory, everything changes.

That the dead should rise up was a common belief in Israel. It is thus expressed in the book of the prophet Daniel: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The picture which Isaiah used of the deliverance of Israel: "Thy dead shall live; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust," was taken from the language of the future reality in which one hoped. Ezekiel's vision of the field full of bones which became alive again through the spirit of the Lord, treated of the same deliverance, but was nevertheless only possible to a people to whom a future resurrection was so self-evident that only supercilious persons like the eminent Sadducees could despise it. Now Jesus is said to have risen from the dead. Has the day of judgment, then—the last day—really come? They should not be surprised, for the sense of their guilt and of their being involved in the sin of the whole world is too powerful. But the Lord was said to have risen and to have appeared unto Simon. But not this alone; He was with the disciples, had appeared unto them, while the doors were shut. It is not the last day which dawned on the Easter morning, but a day of grace, first for the disciples, who had Him with them again and with Him everything which they ever had believed and hoped for, and still more. But Thomas is still doubting, for he can not believe that Jesus should

have returned again from death to those who had denied and forsaken Him. Resurrection of the dead, yes, this he believes—also that one can actually rise from the dead, for he himself had lately seen the resuscitation of Lazarus. But a resurrection of Jesus, which is not the sign of judgment, is too much for him. But Jesus, who was crucified, dead, buried, and yet risen again, appears to him also, and asks him to see and to feel that it is really He, and to say unto himself: “Now we have Jesus again! now all is forgiven!” For “blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed”—believed as the disciples have hitherto believed, and as Peter has confessed it for the disciples, and as Jesus always desired it; not the mere fact of His resurrection, but this fact in and with its meaning. Otherwise one may indeed perish with and without acknowledgment of this fact, or may try to persuade himself of the importance of the forgiveness without the fact of the resurrection—an impossible thing, just as impossible as the indwelling of Christ in our hearts, except “the word had become flesh and dwelt among us.” It means to believe that now as never before it has become manifest that “God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.” Thus the disciples experience and learn the actual forgiveness of sins procured through Christ’s innocent and patient suffering and death, brought to light by the resurrection, appropriated to them or effectuated in them through the peace salutation of the risen One. Then was confirmed on the day of Pentecost the pardoning of the world through the Holy Ghost, who

ever since confirms everywhere the word concerning Christ, and of our redemption through Him, as Paul, Peter, and John unanimously testify. They have not lost the Savior, the Redeemer, as they first thought, but have Him back and now have Him forever. In this nothing is changed by His ascension, for this departure only means that Jesus must occupy heaven and wait at the right hand of God till the Gospel concerning Him is preached in the whole world. Nothing and no one can deprive the disciples of their Savior. It is God's wondrous grace which gave Him back again to them—not too wondrous to him who is ready to believe the most wondrous of all: the forgiveness of his sins. But to believe this is entirely impossible to him whose thinking and imagining and believing is utterly bound to the connection of the things in nature and history. One can only believe it as a deed which God did in connection with another history—as it happens otherwise, that very history in which the sentence becomes actually operative: “where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.” God pardons, Jesus pardons; all sin, all unfaithfulness is forgiven. Jesus is risen not only to inform the disciples of it, but the forgiveness is thus effectuated in men, for whom He died. As Paul says: “Christ was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification.”

Thus it follows that Christ suffered and died in order that the world should not be condemned, which had deserved to be condemned for what it had wrought on Him, and ever and ever deserves to be condemned. Instead, because the world was condemned, He suffered

death. This was the Father's premeditated counsel and will, as Peter expresses it. Jesus, rejected by the world, has not forever departed from the world. He is rather given back by the Father to our human life and thus to the world. In this living Jesus, belonging to us, we have the forgiveness of sins for the sake of His suffering and death. His suffering and death, His crucifixion by the hands of men, took place after the foreordained counsel and will of God, and cleanses us from all sins, covers all our guilt. For our sake it came about, that we might not be condemned. This was the price for our deliverance from judgment. Thus we are children of God, or acceptable with God, and this concerns us, the whole race. "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him," saith John. Paul saith: "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath through Him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life." It is of great significance that we hear and believe the truth of the wondrous message, that we know and receive the fact, apply it to ourselves, and say: *We* are redeemed, *I* am redeemed; *we* are pardoned, *I* am pardoned! Whoever hears this message hears God's words, God's voice, which calls him to Jesus. Whoever believes it, believes in God and believes in Jesus, who is now something to us that no other man can be, something,

indeed, which no brother could be to his brother. For He is our redeemer, our deliverer from judgment. This no one can be, not even a mother for her child. Tho, in fact, He is our brother, fully like us, member of our communion, yet is He our Lord, the only One in whom we can trust before the face of God. He suffered because of us, but not only because of us but at the same time *with* us, and not only *with* us but *for* us in our stead, when judgment was to come upon us. What our sin and guilt has imposed upon us to suffer He bore ; it was imposed upon Him, and thereby He redeemed us from the curse. There shall come a day, however, when He will visibly also manifest before all the world that He is the Lord over all, over the destiny of the whole world, unto whom the Father has delivered all things. For as He has ascended to heaven and gone back to God (who is not only in this world, but also beyond it and above it), thus Jesus shall some day also return and appear in this world as one who is above it, and yet will still be as He has ever been, our comrade and brother. This, however, will take place only when His command has been executed after God's will and His Gospel, the Gospel of His cross and resurrection for us, the Gospel of its redemption, has been preached to the whole world. There is a forgiveness of sins, there is a deliverance from judgment and punishment, there is a redemption only in Christ's sufferings, death, and resurrection, only in the crucified and risen Jesus. He is the Christ, the Anointed and Messenger of God, to our whole race.

Thus it happens that those who believe in Him

acknowledge Him also as their Lord. He is one who forever has the destiny of us all in His hand. He has redeemed us with His own precious blood and now lives and makes intercession for us, and always saves those who come to God through Him. But if He is the Lord, if He saves those who come to God through Him, one understands that His believers may pray to Him. We understand that the designation, "All-that-call-upon-the-name-of-the-Lord-Jesus-Christ," is the oldest name of those who believe in Him as the Messiah. The addressing of prayer to Jesus is just the mark that distinguishes belief in the Messiah from the unbelief of Israel, and this mark remains even among the Gentiles for those who are converted to Christ. But if He is a being to whom one prays, tho' He is our brother He is nevertheless also our God and Lord, for one can pray only to Him who is God and Lord. But prayer is made to Him not because He became so much more than we, for none can *become* a God; but because He who is and was our God and Lord became our brother, entirely man, that nothing more may separate us from Him. In His love He holds everything, even Himself, for us. He became wholly man, flesh, as we are, altho He is God over all things, blessed forever! He is not a man that *has been*, but what He was while on earth He is still, only not, as He then was, confined to a certain place, but now unbounded, everywhere that one prays to Him. He belongs to us with a completeness with which no other belongs to us. He belongs to us as God only belongs to us, and we belong to Him as we belong to God, before whom we must appear and before whom

we should walk. We stand in communion with Him as we stand in communion with God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this has not become less because it is a communion of love transcending all conceivable measure in that He partook of our flesh and blood, but rather greater and more significant. He, our brother, stands before us as the Son of God, whom the Father has chosen as the redeemer of the world, with whom the Father shares everything and who shares everything with the Father. He is the eternal Son of God, who belongs to God, as the son to the father. God and man at the same time ; whether we apprehend it or not, He is both. We can not think of Him as He lies before us in the manger, hangs before us on the cross, stands before us as the risen One, otherwise than of One who, on the other hand, is God and Lord over all, to whom we pray and in whom we hope. He is with the Father now, sitting at the right hand of the Majesty, exalted, just as He was with the Father in glory before He came into the world to suffer and to die for us and because of us. This is the purport of His own words: " I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." What He came to do and must do was done and finished when He suffered and died for us. Now He is raised and lives forever, lives for us, and makes intercession for us. That we do not see Him since He ascended is because He has patience with the world, which knows Him not yet, and which is to know Him through the brethren whom He has won. Only when the whole world knows of

Him and has the offer in Him of redemption through His blood, will He come again in His glory and in the glory of the Father to unite unto Himself the congregation of those who believe in Him and to unite as well Himself unto them. Then only shall we see what we have believed.

Thus the apostles proclaim Christ, who is our God and Lord, and yet our brother, or who is our brother and yet at the same time our God and Lord. Of Him Paul says not only: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, tho he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich"; he speaks still more plainly: "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is the Christ, "whose are the fathers, and of whom He is, as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever." This Christ was indeed born like ourselves, and carried the potency of death in His mortal flesh; nevertheless, He was not born subject to death by necessity as we are, but He was born into the flesh that He might of His own will die, and, dying, bring to naught by His

death him who had the power of death. In this Christ everything has been manifested to us which God has to say to us, or ever is or will be for us. God's word and the Christ: God's eternal word, power, and law of our existence, and He, the eternal Son, can not be separated from each other. When I think of Him I think of all that God has to say to me, and when I think of God's word I think of Jesus, the Savior, the Messiah, the Redeemer. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He "upholds all things by the word of His power." He was ere the world was, which from the beginning is dependent on Him, can only be and exist through Him. At length He came—"the word became flesh and dwelt among us." In the light which arose to the apostle John concerning Him, the days of His earthly life now stand before our eyes. What He did and spoke are the deeds and words of Him who was chosen from eternity to be the Savior of the world. This divinity shines through the lowliness of the Son of Man, and therefore he saith: "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." For neither John nor any one else has ever perceived how deeply God has humbled Himself, to take forever and fully an interest in us and to belong to us.

True, it was only by looking backward from the resurrection that the apostles were able to see very clearly into this mystery of Christ. Ever and ever they had waited until He should accomplish His great redeeming deed, and they had not understood why (as they thought) He did not do it, but rather suffered

Himself to be misappreciated, wronged, and oppressed. Now they knew a little why His whole life was a continued humiliation and what was meant by the words, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Now His humility, His modesty, His lowliness, His patience in His innocent suffering and death were to them the proof of His everlasting love as their Savior. He, the great King and Lord of heaven and earth, the risen Prince of Victory, having the keys of death and hell, would not use this His eternal power and Godhead against us. He would not be God against us, but *for* us. He would be all that He is *for* us, and share with us all things. On this account His suffering and death, the end of His entire life full of suffering, necessarily belong to His vocation as a Savior. He only could fulfil this His calling, the object for which He came, till, according to the will of His Father, He suffered all that the world with its sin could do to the Holy One of God. There it was not only proved but visibly demonstrated that the sin of the world is no longer imputed unto it. God stepped in for Him and justified Him by raising Him from the dead, not for condemnation upon the world, but that He should deal with it as the everlasting, almighty Savior. For He who is to deliver us from death and judgment, and not let us perish eternally, must be almighty. But He is almighty; the disciples have learned and now they know that what they did not have in Him before, they have now, and have forever.

This is the testimony of the apostles concerning Him. This is what they believed who became pioneers in Christianity and in the faith of Christ, and in the

possession of the Spirit of Christ. How it was possible to believe such things, for this they cared not, because the most unconceivable fact which can be imagined had been offered and experienced in this announcement: forgiveness of sins, life and blessedness. Whether this is conceivable, whether it can be attained by a power of our thoughts or is to be received only as a gift of grace—of these questions we shall treat later on. Here we are concerned only to state this sequence of faith: forgiveness of our sins through the eternal Son of God, the man Jesus, who for our sakes and for our pardon became flesh.

III

THE RECORD OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE SYNOPTIC ACCOUNT



ALL that we know of Christ rests on the testimony of the apostles. They speak and testify of the things which they saw and heard, that "we may have fellowship with them," and that our "fellowship be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." They attest it not as disinterested witnesses, but as witnesses who also understand the importance of all which they had experienced, and who wish to help us to a like understanding and possession. We have no other testimonies concerning Jesus, His earthly life, His work, and His suffering. The non-Biblical literature of Israel contains no mention of His name, but speaks of Him as the "One who was hanged," whose "name and memory should be blotted out." Thus we have only the testimonies of believing Israelites, who, with the whole first community, proved their Christianity by remaining in the teaching of the apostles. Therefore, our Gospels, in so far as the apostles themselves had no direct part in their composition, are only records of the apostolic testimony to Christ. We detect in them also the work of the entire believing community, in which the same witness concerning Him was always present. We shall not, therefore, expect that the picture contained in the Gospel of the

earthly life, work, and suffering of Christ should essentially differ from that which we have drawn from the apostolic epistles. It is possible that this picture, or both pictures, may suggest a number of considerations which we may have to explain. Before this, however, we must endeavor accurately to picture to ourselves what is recorded of Christ.

The whole appearance and work of Jesus stand clearly before the eyes of the disciples. They know what has attracted them to Him, and what has united them to Him, and they know it now the better, since in consequence of the resurrection not only many things that had been riddles have become clear to them, but also many a word which they had forgotten, or whose depth and power they had hitherto not yet grasped, now appears to them in its entire blessed importance. Everything came vividly before their minds again. Their reminiscences enriched themselves the more they spoke of Him, who was their one and all, and thus was fulfilled in them the word which Jesus had spoken of the Spirit whom He was to send to them: "The same shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." The more they became absorbed therein the clearer became in them the picture of Him to whom they were united, whom they had lost and now had found again forever, even tho they were on earth and He at the right hand of God, exalted to participation in God's power and majesty.

Their reminiscences, however, reach further back than to the appearance of Jesus. In all Israel there are those who are awakened by the appearance of a prophet, the sign that God had some special message

for His people. Thus, as we read in Amos : “ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants, the prophets.” That John the Baptist was a prophet of God was an undoubted fact. Nothing entitled him in the conditions then present to the conclusion that the time of the fulfilment of all the promises of God was at hand. One thing he could have said without being a prophet : “ Repent ” ; for this every serious Israelite could demand of every coreligionist—yes, of the whole people. But the rationale for this demand, “ for the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, is at hand,” how establish this ? And how is it that John assumes the right not only to symbolize but at the same time to warrant the forgiveness of their sins to those who repent—an office wholly outside of his regular priestly calling and outside of the lawful order ? What gave him the right to ask penitents to come to him and be baptized, instead of pointing them to the temple and to the priests ? How did he know that One was to come after him, yes, was already present, who, mightier than himself, had already the fan in the hand with which He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor ? And yet John’s words were believed, not, indeed, by the official representatives of religion—the priests, skeptical minded and altogether unbelieving ; the performers of religion, the “ respectable ” Pharisees and scribes—but by the people, by the great multitude, and most readily by those among them who, in their deepest soul, longed after the salvation of God. How could they believe him ? How was it that, as it seems, no one publicly appeared against the Baptist ? What recon-

ciled the people was the union, in John's message, of judgment and grace, the call to repentance founded upon the nearness of God and the fulfilment of His promises. The prophet was right with his call and in the promise that supplied to the hearer a sufficient motive for accepting it. The promise, however, with which he reinforced his call to repentance, and which he symbolized in baptism, he had by revelation from God, for "the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness."

In the power of this word of God, as a command which had been given to Him, as a revelation which He had received, He appeared. The law had not fulfilled its purpose; it had not been kept, nor was it now kept, not even by those who made it their calling to study and to fulfil it. On this account it could neither actually, nor even yet symbolically, give what it promised. The entire temple service, that service for which the Psalmist so heartily longed when he desired "to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple," had become useless. There was only one thing which thus far had been Israel's consolation: the grace of God, by which Israel had been chosen, and on which alone Israel's right rested to come to God in repentance and to ask for forgiveness. Was this still valid? God was not obliged to keep His promises after Israel had shown in its long history that it did not fulfil the conditions under which the promise of the future had been made. Then Israel had been the chosen people. Many a time has all their hope in the future seemed to be at an end, but God's faithfulness had always been greater than the

sin of the people, in accordance with the word : “Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.” This and this alone explained the past history of Israel, the only people upon earth who knew the living God to whom He had made Himself specially known. But would the promise still abide with them? During the four hundred years since the old inclination toward idolatry had been exterminated, the incongruity between the high, special, religious privileges of Israel, and the lack of seriousness which it should naturally have practised, had become constantly more glaring. Now the time of the last final settlement seemed to have come.

Then resounded the message of the Baptist. It read not : “The end has come, the wrath of God is kindled, and will eat His people as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble,” but, on the contrary, “The Kingdom, the kingly rule of God, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand !” For this Israel had waited and hoped a long time. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth !” Thus Isaiah had prophesied, for God is Israel’s King, and therefore his Savior. When His hour has come He will prove Himself King by judging the nations, as He did when He led Israel up out of Egypt, and brought it to the place of His habitation. The nations which oppress Israel experience God’s superiority, for Israel’s King has the mastery over all the world ; He subdues the nations and gives liberty and peace to Israel. Zion

shall be the center of the world, whither all nations shall flow together, to receive there their law. Jerusalem is the city of a great King, the seat of God's glory. "Say among the nations, the Lord reigneth : He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," we read in the Psalms. 'This was the Kingship and Kingdom of God which appeared in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which smote the image of the monarchies upon the feet and broke them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors ; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them ; "and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.'" This was the people's hope, in this John hoped. That it should come *now*, that all promises of God, the promises of redemption, of liberty and peace, should now be fulfilled, this he knew through God's revelation. In no place in the history of Israel does it become so clear and evident as here that there has been vouchsafed a special revelation. That which was neither indicated by the social conditions of the time, nor to be read in the closed orbits of the stars, that which not even the most penetrating knowledge of God had been able to disclose to man, that which was contrary to all the expectations of the godly and the ungodly, the just and unjust—namely, that *now, now*, in the time

appointed by God, the day of salvation had come —this was made known to John. The contrary of all that one could expect has come to pass, and the appearance of the Messiah justified the word, justified therewith also the deed of the Baptist. To all Israel, John was the prophet of God, the voice of the preacher in the wilderness, and the wilderness in which he appeared characterized him as this prophet. All Israel went out unto him, to hear his word, to act according to his word in confessing its sins and receiving baptism, and to look for the fulfilment of his prophecy. For the chief significance of John's message was the promise of deliverance from sin and guilt, to attest which was the Baptist's office.

Thither came Jesus also. John knew Him not, but by necessity he must recognize Him, since as prophet of God and forerunner of the Messiah he had received the Divine vocation of testifying of Him and for Him. His relationship to Jesus had afforded him knowledge neither of His person nor of His calling. Jesus had grown up in Galilee unknown and unrecognized; John, in Judea, as the son of a priest and heir of the paternal office. When Jesus appeared, John perceived through the spirit of prophecy which was in him that this was the Messiah to proclaim whom he exists, and in whom and through whom the word of prophecy will become true. Jesus is the man who is actually to bring forgiveness to Israel, which he, the Baptist, can only symbolize. Jesus Himself, in His person, actually *is* forgiveness. Where Jesus is, there is the forgiveness. On this account John refuses to baptize Him, since rather he (John) ought to be baptized of Him. But Jesus con-

strained him, saying: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." For is the sinners' brother appointed to save the sinners? The Baptist perceives that He has not to confess sin, since He came to take it away, to forgive it. But precisely because, tho without sin, He is the brother of sinners, He is able to be more than any one of His human brothers in His power for the forgiveness of sins—for which, indeed, He came. He feels as His whole race feels, or should feel; He longs after that for which all Israel longs; He prays for that which all Israel prays or should pray for, and John baptizes Him with the baptism which symbolizes the granting of His petition that all righteousness be fulfilled. But now is added to the symbol of baptism the Divine reality. The Holy Ghost descends upon Jesus, the Father makes Himself known to this His Son, with whom He stands and will stand united as with no one else, who is to do His work upon earth in the power of the Spirit, through whom God is united to Him and His work in abiding union. The voice of the Father sounds forth, and John hears it: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

With this began the way of Jesus. John had designated Him as the mightier One who was to come after him. The fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor; the ax is already laid unto the root of the tree, and only waits to be lifted up. For among those who had come to Him were many to whom His baptism was displeasing, and who critically opposed His preaching, because their whole tendency referred to the pretended fulfilment of the law. John, however, had put himself outside of the

law. Would he not thereby destroy Israel's hope? Could he be a prophet of God? The others, however, the Sadducees, cared nothing for the fulfilment of the promise, but everything for the preservation of their position and its priestly privileges; they believed not in a working of the living God. To both the Baptist had said: "Think not to say within yourself, We have Abraham to our Father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." The promise is fulfilled which is given to Abraham and his seed, tho the entire posterity of Abraham is not fit to inherit it. But where was the judgment? Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the mightier One, Jesus the Judge, who should judge His people—where was the judgment? Jesus has not abandoned His right of judgment. He will hold it over all nations, and that He is able to execute it He proves, as we shall see; but the time for its execution has not yet come. The way of the Messiah, the Son of God, who had become like unto sinners, and the way to the seat of judgment were very different, not understood even by the Baptist. The first step in this way was a renunciation without its equal, and yet it was only the first step, the beginning. The end was yet a much greater renunciation. Moved by the Spirit of God, which filled Him, He goes into the wilderness, not to the people for whom He had come into the world. What means this? He is baptized; in holy, most serious meditation, and in clear perception of His special calling, He bowed under the hand of the Baptist, and obtained that which He needed to accomplish in the power and name of the Father, the work of His call-

ing. Why does He not now go to the people to show Himself to them as the Messiah sent by God?

He can not and may not begin His work without first fighting with him who has been from the beginning the opponent of God and of His purposes of grace with men, and who has his work here on earth—Satan. Only after having fought this fight, and having conquered in it, can He come down among men. He is summoned by Satan to use His power for His own benefit, or to be bought of him by obtaining without any toil the government of the world, which he professes to give to whomsoever he pleases. But He is not endowed by God to make use of His power for Himself, for His own benefit. It is not God's way that He should obtain recognition for Himself by means that were worthy only of condemnation. God's way is that of humble, perfect faith and obedience to the Father, who will show Him not only what he must do, but also what he must suffer. The degrading assumption that He will sell Himself, as if, as a matter of course, every man has his price for which he will give up God and God's truth and the salvation of his soul that he may obtain the world and what it offers, He must take like a blow in the face. He can only refuse it with words. The significance of it is that He is to save, not to destroy, the world. Then Satan leaves Him, and Jesus returns to John, who meanwhile had become ever sadder and more lonesome.

John the Baptist sees Jesus walking, and bears witness of Him, as John the Evangelist records: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"—a word of faith in which, in one comprehen-

sive, prophetic word, he recalls at the same time that which he has said of the "baptizing in the power of the Spirit" in contradistinction to his own baptism, which was only a symbol containing the promise of the reality, and what the ancient Divine order of the law, as well as the established promise of the forgiveness of sins, sets forth. As to how this forgiveness takes place he says nothing, but as Jesus now again appears for the first time after an absence of more than forty days, John sees how heavy his calling rests on Him, and immediately understands that suffering and sacrifice are necessary if He is to save the people. For no one, literally no one, has fulfilled the word of the Baptist. No one goes and asks Jesus: "Who art Thou?" Still less has any one said: "John has pointed us to Thee." On the following day, seeing Jesus walking alone, the Baptist repeats his words: "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Then two of his disciples, Andrew and John, the son of Zebedee, follow this direction. Two—this was the beginning of discipleship with Him for whom John came, and for whose sake the whole people had come out to him. Two—this was the response with which the prophet of God met; as he said later on: "In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not." But these two, convinced from the beginning by the words of the Baptist, now also further convince themselves, by their own experience, that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah. That which induced them and the others who through them came to Jesus—Simon, whom Jesus called Peter, their friend Philip, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee—to believe on Him, to know Him as the Messiah, and to follow Him

in order to see His power and glory, was the very thing which John had testified unto them. John had spoken of their *sin*, had demanded *repentance* and *confession of sins*. Jesus makes them understand His deep insight into their sin, and to know that it is because of their sin He has come into the world. He felt the groaning of Simon under the power of his sin, and gave him a name which promised to him a future, entirely different from that which he could expect, considering the kind of man he was by nature. He had noted Nathanael's prayer and confession of sin, the like of which no one had ever seen or heard from Peter. Thus Jesus announced to them the grace of God, while he showed them also fully and unreservedly the significance of their sin. They believed, moreover, altho every appearance was against it, that He was the royal deliverer and peace-bringer of Israel. They believed, He would prove Himself such by His power, and so they followed Him, and waited for still greater things they wished and expected to see. That Jesus was righteous, and, indeed, He alone, they had now experienced for themselves. Sin and grace have never before become manifest as they are now shown. In the way which He went they experienced so much of His Messiahship that they attached themselves to Him confidently, altho this way was provisionally only one of humble renunciation. Jesus indeed could not come before the people with the claim : "I am the Messiah !" Either none would have believed it, or they would have hailed Him, lifted Him on the shield, and made Him king, without even thinking in the least that not the sin and violence of others but our own sin is our

reproach. In any case, nothing else would have been left for Jesus but to assert Himself and speak God's truth with all His might against His people. On His own account He had to leave it to the holiness of the cause which He represented, and to the activity which He should unfold, to make Himself rightly known.

The cause which He represented was nothing else than that which John had announced as being at hand, a wondrous gift of grace—the Kingdom of God. This is the tenor of all Divine promises and all gifts of salvation which God prepared for men from eternity. It is the Kingdom in which God rules, and men under the protection of His might and love have peace, and in peace enjoy freedom from all misery and distress. In this Kingdom the word concerning Israel's redemption and Jerusalem's deliverance is fulfilled: "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." It is the Kingdom of the Father, for which Israel has longed in its deepest distress, in the most grievous sighing after deliverance, in its darkest nights. This name Jesus takes up when repeating the sermon of the Baptist. He calls God Father, as the Baptist has never called Him. But He did not thereby proclaim new knowledge of God which had come to Him, or had been discovered by Him, or had been exclusively given to Him, in opposition to the Israelitish Old Testament knowledge of God. It has been said that in its narrowness and limitation the Old Testament idea is false and can not satisfy Israel, because it requires of us to think of God as an austere, inexorable judge. The contrast has been drawn between the Old Testament

use of this name *Father* and the sense in which Jesus used it (compare Isaiah lxiii : 16 ; Jeremiah iii : 4, 19 ; xxxi : 9 ; Malachi i : 6 ; ii : 10 ; Deuteronomy xxxii : 6), but there is not a single passage in the discourses of Jesus to warrant the theory current in our day that such a contrast exists. Jesus called God Father because He did the deed of redemption for which Israel waited. He is the Father of Jesus because Jesus is His Son, whom He has chosen to execute His redemption ; He is Israel's Father because Israel is the object of redemption promised, and He is the Father of all those to whom He sends the redemption. With the redemption He proves that He has not forgotten His people, but interests Himself in them, shows His power and establishes His Kingdom among them. God's Kingdom and God's name of *Father* belong together. God's Kingdom takes its name not from the obedience of the citizens of a kingdom, but from God's deed of redemption. God's name of Father reveals the ground of compassionate love, and shows us why God interests Himself in those whom He has chosen for His children. He made this meaning known to Pharaoh through Moses, when He said : " Israel is my first-born son."

In this connection of God's name of Father with the proclamation of God's Kingdom, we see the first difference between the proclamation of Jesus and that of the Baptist. This at first tells us nothing essentially new. It emphasizes the fact that the promise to Israel is about to be fulfilled—indeed, is now already in process of fulfilment. Nevertheless, one can but feel that there is a peculiar meaning in which Jesus says

Father in addressing God or in speaking of God. He speaks of Him as Father, who has called Himself *Israel's* Father, and who has called Israel His son, His first-born, and whom Israel also addresses as Father in its devoutest prayers. Jesus says "the Father," "your Father," "My Father," but never "*our* Father," except where he tells the disciples how to pray. The actual fulfilment of the promise is connected with Jesus; where Jesus is and only where He is there is God's Kingdom; therefore He says Father as no one else can say it. But this changes nothing in the idea of the Kingdom of God, except that this is, as now, in the process of final fulfilment of all the promises of God. The present does not look like the fulfilment of the promise, and yet it would be seen in the final end of His mission on earth that something more glorious than the promise has come. In the mouth of Jesus also the Kingdom of God means that condition of Israel relative to the world in which all promises are or have been fulfilled. In this Kingdom Israel enjoys forgiveness of sins, suspension of judgment, and relief from distress under which it groans, and thence eternal peace. On this account the Kingdom of God or the establishment of God's government is brought about by a great redemptive deed, by the practical proof of the power and love of God for the redemption of His people.

But where is, where remains, this redemptive deed? Is it, perhaps, to consist only in new and different thoughts and aspects, through which Jesus taught His disciples to look upon life and the course of events in the world? But aspects are not powers, thoughts

bring no liberty and peace, and do not take away the heavy and painful reality of God's judgment resting upon Israel. Jesus had appeared, and Jesus then rather calls attention to *Himself*, tells them that He will some day come to judge the earth and to save His own, and that whoever comes to Him and abides by Him is not only sure of his future, but shall also have peace in the present. We have but to recall the parable of the widow and the unrighteous judge, and the discourses of the Lord concerning His coming. These He seals and endorses in the last evening of His ministry at the institution of the sacraments. These are words that He spoke at the end of His career. He had, indeed, many occasions to speak otherwise if He had, through His experience, come to an idea of the Kingdom of God different from that which He had originally—the idea preached by John the Baptist. But there has been no change. The Kingdom of God, for which He came, is the same at the end of His career as in the beginning. It represents in His earlier as in His later teaching a world-condition brought about by the righteous judgment of God the Father, in which His own have peace and freedom from all distress through the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus proclaims this Kingdom, He brings in this Kingdom; *where He is, there is this Kingdom*. It is appointed for the poor, who in the inmost depths of their being suffer under their poverty, and are oppressed and pained by those who have the power in the world. For the sufferers, for the mourners, for those who can only tell God their sorrow and wait for God's righteous judgment on their own behalf, for such is this Kingdom appointed, for such it

exists. But where is it? The Baptist is in prison, and waits in vain to be the first to whom the Messiah should reveal His full power. Jesus points him to the signs of His Messiahship: the miracles which He performs, the poor who are evangelized, that the fulfilment of the promise is preached to the poor—but where is the fulfilment? Jesus adds: “And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.” It is as if He bade him suffer and die, looking for the salvation of God, like Jacob. It is as if He had said: “I am the Messiah, of this you can be certain, and in this certainty you can suffer and die.” Has He therewith, then, transferred the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, from this world to the other? Hardly, for He teaches His disciples to say: “Thy Kingdom come” and “deliver us from evil.” To the Kingdom of God belongs, indeed, the future, the new world, the new heaven, the new earth; but the present also belongs to it. But in the present the Kingdom is still in distress. He, the Messiah himself, suffers under the misconception of men who turn away from all Divine things. On this account the conditions then present did not look like God’s Kingdom because men opposed the government of God, and therefore opposed Jesus.

Here and there were a few who knew Him as the God-sent Messiah, and followed Him or believed in Him. Not only did a vast contrast appear between the claim which He makes or which is made for Him and the actual appearance of the world, between the hoped-for and desired Kingdom of God and the poor reality which men saw, but even His word that He speaks

is too serious, the salvation-message which He brings does not suit those who after their own imagination have made a picture of the future—the scribes, Pharisees, priests, and elders of the people. The message indeed appears to confirm their hopes in promising freedom from all affliction and evil, but these hopes are to be confirmed through the forgiveness of their sins. *This* forgiveness, as Jesus brings it and practises it, they do not want. That we need forgiveness may be admitted. But they thought themselves to have a claim to forgiveness through their descent from Abraham and as belonging to the chosen people of God. As it is among us to-day, they relied upon their good works, fastings, alms, as merits which they believed they had acquired and would acquire. On this account Jesus remains alone, and lonely walks His way; the cities of Chorazim, Bethsaida, and Capernaum He must rebuke, because, exalted unto heaven by His presence, they would not believe. No one has known Him, no one knows the Father, who speaks through Him and in Him, and is present with Him. This is the lonely condition of Him who came to fulfil all promises of God. Nevertheless, He persists in His invitation to all that labor and are heavy laden, that He may quicken them and give rest unto their souls. He sends His disciples into all cities and markets of the land to proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God—in vain! He performs miracles more abundantly than any one had ever done before Him—not merely for the sake of men, tho they were miracles of Divine compassion. Through them is revealed besides that He is the master over the mighty,

supreme in power over the evil one. This, too, is in vain. Nevertheless, He persists in this work of bringing in the Kingdom of God, which, however, because of the evil doing of men, is far different from the Kingdom that had been commonly expected. He speaks of it only in parables which show the condemnation of those who know Him not and will not know Him—a thought at first incomprehensible even to His disciples. For in all parables He speaks of those points of the Kingdom of God of which they did not clearly think. Thus He patiently explains to them in the parable of the sower how thrice the word fails, and only in a fourth part of the field, which is the world, bears fruit; in the parable of the tares among the wheat that are not now to be rooted up, how the children of evil are to remain unto the end of days for the sake of the children of the Kingdom. Jesus is present, He is the Messiah, and He says of Himself: “But if I by the power of the Spirit of God cast out the devils, then the Kingdom of God has come without your perceiving it.” He can only testify thereof and pardon the sins of those who believe in Him. He will not and can not yet begin judgment and establish the glory of the Kingdom; this will come later on. First must all be accomplished upon Him that is hidden in the human heart of enmity—enmity against God and God’s works.

Jesus is on His last journey to Jerusalem in the parts of Cæsarea Philippi in the extremest northern border of the country. True, they speak of Him everywhere in the holy land, but He is not regarded as the Messiah. It is questionable, on the other hand, whether

even His disciples are firm and clear in their belief in Him, and have been so convinced of His Messiahship that they will stand firmly for Him in the face of the whole people. They have to acknowledge to themselves that everywhere indeed great things, yea, wonderful things, are spoken of Him. The main thing, however, is not mentioned. It is not yet known, they do not understand, that He is the Messiah, chosen of God to be the King of His Kingdom. This expected One is called *Messiah* or *Anointed*, King by the grace of God. "And ye?" Jesus asks them. "Who say ye that I am? Men call me the Son of Man, because they can not know the Son of Man as the Messiah, the Son of God, the King anointed of God." Thereupon Peter makes the confession in the name of all disciples: "Thou art the Messiah of God," or "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Hearing this, Jesus promises that upon this, the foundation of this confession, He will build His Church, the Church of the redeemed, that congregation which He had already in view when He said to His disciples: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Nothing can be said against the authenticity of this word that prophecies the building of His Church, against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail. Israel was accustomed to call itself the Church of God, and had waited until the Kingdom should be appointed to it.

After the belief of the disciples had thus been expressed over against the disbelief of the whole people, Jesus now clearly and unequivocally points onward to His end. As the records show, He had from the

beginning His death before Him. In the face of death He has preached not only the kingdom of God, as the fulfilment of all prophecies, but He has also attested it as both present and future. How this was possible, what connection there is between the two facts, is a matter for consideration by itself. But the fact that Jesus, according to our records, from the beginning saw both these facts together must be acknowledged. Rejection and deliverance to death awaited Him who had challenged the confession that He is the Messiah, the King of the Kingdom of God. From the beginning He had hinted at and pointed to it—now He expressed it openly and without disguise. The disciples do not comprehend it. Again it is Peter who takes the Lord apart and asks Him to spare Himself, that this thing may not happen to him. For this Peter is rebuked by Jesus: "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Two of the disciples, the sons of Zebedee, believe in His Messiahship, and are ready, as they think, and in the sense in which they understand it, to drink the cup that He was about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that He is baptized with. They know that He must suffer and be deeply baptized into the floods of hatred, but they can and will suffer with Him, because the Kingdom nevertheless shall come; they wish, when it is established, to be nearest to Him. Jesus refuses their request, and at the same time addresses Himself to the other disciples, of whom, finally, each wished to be the first, and says unto them: "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise au-

thority over them. Not so shall it be among you. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." They understand Him not. He also speaks of the future, saying that the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations, and when this is done He shall come in the glory of the Father, who has chosen and redeemed His people, and all holy angels with Him. This the disciples readily believe; but that death should intervene, this they did not understand. He had said to Israel: "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Israel thinks this impossible. Finally comes the last evening on which once more He celebrates with the disciples and they with Him in one and the same ceremony—the Passover at Jerusalem, the memorial Supper of the redemption from Egypt, and the promised, long-desired Messianic redemption through the revelation of the Kingdom of God. The disciples expect at this time the revelation of His glory, the great Messiah-deed of Israel's redemption. Jesus is prepared for death. He gives them bread and wine at the Passover meal, and says: "This is My body, My blood, given and shed for you for the remission of sins." They understand Him not. But this they understand, that He will appoint unto them a Kingdom, even as His Father appointed unto Him. But they did not comprehend His word: "All shall be offended in Me this night," and they assure Him, Peter first of all, of their unshaken fidelity. But—they keep not the faith. Judas betrays Him,

Peter denies Him, all the others forsake Him and run away, and thus rejected by the people, sentenced by the authorities, given up by the Gentiles, forsaken by His own, goes on His way to the cross.

No man expected anything more of Him. There is but one here who understands the wrong that is being perpetrated, a being belonging to the refuse of the world, who had seen the wrongs that men can do in cold blood. He is himself unrighteous, yet had he the right he would arrange the whole world before God's tribunal. But he is not right himself. He is a thief, himself condemned. Jesus alone is right, the only righteous one of all. He is the only One who has authority before God, and whoever will be saved from condemnation must take refuge with Him. Knowing this, this man confesses that he was receiving the due reward of his deeds, and prays: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Jesus, however, accepts this petition, and promises him that he shall be with Him that very day in Paradise. Thus, dying, He endorses still the Gospel which He has preached. But when He knew that all things were finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, He said, "I thirst," and one of the soldiers filled a sponge with vinegar and put it to His mouth. When He therefore had received the vinegar, He said: "It is finished! and He bowed the head and gave up His spirit."

Is this all? Jesus had proclaimed great things, the Kingdom of God—not merely a Kingdom in which those meet who intend to do the will of God, and who suffer God to be their Lord whose motives and objects

should also be the chief motives and objects of their life, but still more significantly a Kingdom which has its name from the fact that God establishes it. It is God who shows in it His power—the power in very deed to redeem His own. It is God who through this Kingdom, in the omnipotence of His love, fulfils His promises, not for and on the righteous, not for those who are whole, but for and on sinners, for and on such sinners as she was of whom it is recorded that He knew not “who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth Him.” For them Jesus was sent from God, for them He brings the grace of God, which they need; such as these will He comfort and revive. To Him should they come, in Him should they believe. *He is not subject, but object of religion.*

Has He the right? Are these statements of Him still true? Or must we first purge the accounts of Him from every accessory of Jewish particularism, of Jewish theology, of Jewish presumption and elements of narrowness in their knowledge of nature? He said great things about the inestimable worth of a human soul, indeed, not merely in the figurative discourses upon the birds of the heaven, the lilies of the field, the hairs on our head, but even more pointedly in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son. These were sinners’ souls, in whom Jesus had an interest, as He shows when He interests Himself in the paralytic and the publican. It was not, as Wellhausen says, that “His predilection for sinners sometimes seems to go too far, but as to this one must always take into account His opposition to the Pharisees.” Rather what Paul attests later is true: “Where

sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." Jesus has proved this, and thus made Himself the center of attraction to sinners to assure the most miserable of the miserable that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and that He is the King of this Kingdom, chosen of God.

Now He had gone. Where now abides and remains the Kingdom of God? Does it not seem as if we were obliged to distinguish at least the transient and the enduring in the accounts concerning Jesus? But before we proceed to that we must take into consideration another record of Jesus' career—the Gospel according to John, whose narrative is or seems to be so extremely different from that of the synoptic Gospels that we are obliged to give it our attention.

IV

THE JOHANNEAN ACCOUNT



WE are now to consider the relation of the accounts of Christ in John with the synoptists. In the first place, it must be admitted that an essential part of the difference arises from the different purpose of the Gospel. The Johannean Gospel is intended for the congregation of believers, who already know and follow Christ, and is meant to strengthen, confirm, and enrich them, and to develop their faith more fully. The synoptic Gospels, on the other hand, give us that record of Jesus' career and history as it was again and again reported in connection with the missionary preaching, and as it very soon took, as to the main parts, a relatively fixed form. Matthew gives the apology of Jesus' Messiahship over against Judaism; Luke a record of the history of Jesus, and the preaching of the Gospel set down for the enlightenment of a prominent heathen interested in Christianity; while Mark has put together what he heard again and again in the missionary preaching. We may thus understand how it is that we meet a difference between the Johannean account and that of the synoptists, which is similar to the difference that appears between the apostolic account and that of Christ Himself. Only incidentally do the apostles speak of the Kingdom of God, with the idea

of which, however, they are well acquainted. Instead of it they proclaim the King of this Kingdom, Jesus the Messiah, the Anointed. They speak of all the good and great things which we owe to Him. For after the resurrection, through which God has certified His claims, His person and the Kingdom of His person stand in the foreground; with His person the whole matter is given: Jesus the King or the Anointed saves, judges, gives eternal life; and thus the Kingdom of God exists wherever the Kingdom of Jesus is believed and experienced. However, the more John reckons with the fact of the misconduct of Israel, or, as he always says, of the Jews, the greater seems to him the necessity of emphasizing the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Further, according to Matthew, when Christ speaks of the Kingdom of God, He uses the customary Jewish expression, *Kingdom of Heaven*, altho Matthew also uses the expression, *Kingdom of God*. According to Luke and Mark, Jesus uses only the expression, *Kingdom of God*. The message of the Kingdom of God, however, forms the true purport of the message of Jesus. Even according to John, Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, as the conversation with Nicodemus proves, recalling that which John and Jesus have previously attested. This also accords with the word of Jesus to Pilate at the end of His career. To Pilate's question, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" He answers, "My Kingdom is not of this world; thou sayest that I am a king." Why does not John make Jesus also announce the Kingdom of God, since he knows the fact that Jesus preached the Kingdom of God? But,

does John mean to give a full survey of the career of Jesus? Let us recollect that there are presented to us only single, isolated extracts from that which has been called the didactic life of Jesus. In the second chapter we have the miracle at the marriage in Cana, the cleansing of the temple, and the short mention of the faith which Jesus found in Jerusalem, on which, however, He did not much rely; in the third chapter there is the conversation with Nicodemus; in the fourth the motive for Jesus' journey to Galilee, the conversation with the Samaritan woman, the healing of the ruler's son, but nothing farther of Jesus' activity in Galilee. And yet John knows of this, for, after he narrated in the fifth chapter the healing of the sick by the pool of Bethesda, and the discourse with the Jews following the same, he speaks in the sixth chapter of the feeding of the five thousand near the sea of Gennesaret, which was the cause for the great discourse on the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of the Son of Man—a sermon recorded by John only. In the seventh chapter Jesus speaks at the feast of tabernacles, and in the eighth chapter calls Himself the light of the world. To this should be joined the discourse of Jesus upon discipleship, and the account in which the unbelieving Jews accuse Him of having a devil. In the ninth chapter we have the healing of the man born blind; in the tenth Jesus speaks of Himself as the good shepherd; in the eleventh occurs the raising of Lazarus; in the twelfth the anointing in Bethany and the entrance into Jerusalem; in the thirteenth the beginning of the last days, the washing of the disciples' feet, the betrayal of Judas, and from that on the pecul-

iar discourses of Jesus with His disciples, the high-priestly prayer, and the history of the passion. Thus to the twelfth chapter we have only isolated extracts from Jesus' career, which are not even intended to make the impression of a report of His whole life and teaching. For John, as we derive from a number of individual features of his Gospel, presupposes among his readers an acquaintance not only with the history of Jesus, but with the synoptic narrative of the same, and his purpose is not to supplement this, but to record that which in his very intimate relation to Jesus had become important to him as the main question and report its decision—the question, namely: Is Jesus the Messiah? And why would the Jews not believe this? On this account John records only the discourses bearing upon a decision of these questions. Beside this, he gives us some of the familiar discourses of Jesus with His disciples, as the farewell discourses. He shows in this that he has retained the ear and heart of the disciple whom Jesus loved, and would not keep from the Church his recollections connected with the most serious, and, at the same time, most intimate hours with the Master.

We thus see in the discourses of Jesus that John's Gospel concerns not the Kingdom of God, but Christ Himself as the Messiah or the Son of God. This is exactly the difference which distinguishes the apostolic accounts from the sayings of Jesus Himself, while at the same time we note that there is perfect agreement with the synoptists in that Jesus is called in the same sense as in the synoptics the Son of God, and God is called in the same sense the Father, your

Father, my Father. Since Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, the question as to His relation to this Kingdom, the question as to His Messiahship, had to arise. Is He the Messiah? *Is He the Son of God?* For the question as to the Messiahship was the question as to the Sonship of God. If it could be proved to Jesus that in this very relation He is not the Son of God, that He is in opposition to the Father, the question as to His Messiahship was decided. Then, say what He pleased, do miracles as many and as great as He pleased, He was not the Messiah. With this decisive question alone the Johannean Gospel is concerned. On this account the evangelist records events and discourses which refer only to this, and which to this point are most exactly characteristic. Such are Jesus' discourses with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman.

To John the designation *Son of God* in the synoptics is nothing else than the designation of the Messiah expressing the unique relation to Him of God, who had chosen Him to be His Anointed, the King of His Kingdom. God's Son was to be Israel's King. This He had never completely been. Since the destruction of the Jewish kingdom Israel has waited for Him, who forever was to be the royal Son of God, who should establish forever the Kingdom of God, forever be the salvation of His people, and thereby of the whole world. True, God had once said: "Israel is my son, my first-born; out of Egypt did I call my son," and in its darkest hour, in its most fervent prayers for the promised deliverance, Israel had addressed God as its Father, as may be seen from the

well-known passage in the Book of Wisdom (II., 10 ff.; V., 1 ff.). But they were not used to speak of God as the Father, but only to pray to Him thus, and Israel called not itself Son of God, still less *the* Son of God. This predicate they uttered only to the Messiah, whose relation to God was to transcend every human measure. Now Jesus came and spoke not only of God as the Father—this they had before understood and let it pass. The Jews said of themselves, in one of these controversial discourses with Jesus: "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." Jesus, however, spoke of God as *His* Father, as no one otherwise did; He referred His work to His Father—"My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Was this not blasphemy? He, a man of man, a son of man, made Himself equal with God, and gave to the name of Father and to the name of Son a meaning which no one could understand or acknowledge without acknowledging, at the same time, the Messiahship of Jesus. For only an understanding of the reality of the Messiah could unfold the whole meaning and purport of the designation: "The Son of God." Shall this Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, be the Son of God? A son of man the Son of God? Never! And since He is not this, He is also not the Messiah; He is also not the light of the world, the bread of life, which came down out of heaven and gives life to the world!

This, however, is exactly the same meaning in which the record of the synoptic Gospels speaks, not only of the fathership of God, but also of the unique Divine sonship of Christ. Jesus says: "I thank Thee,

O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." In the same sense Jesus thinks of His Divine sonship, where He expects and receives from His disciples the confession: "Thou (the Son of Man, whom men regard as their equal and consequently not as the Messiah), Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." In the same sense He says on this occasion to Peter: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." It is the same idea of the Son of God, the beloved or chosen Son, that is meant at the baptism and at the transfiguration of Jesus, at His temptation and condemnation, and this is also conveyed in the idea of the fathership of God in its connection with the Kingdom of God and the relation of Jesus to it.

Then remains for the Gospel of John the peculiarity of representing Jesus as One who, in an eternal manner, was God and became man. John's history is the shadowing forth of Him in whom from eternity everything unites what God has to tell to the world. On this account He is called the Word, and, as this Word, He is God. For everything which God is and will be for us He is, and everything is comprised and terminated in Him. In this designation there is to be found no trace whatever of Philonian and Alexandrian

religious philosophy, and the later discussions of Greek theology on the "Logos" only wrongfully start from this assumption. He, the Word, which God has spoken to us and given unto us, the Word which was with God, and was and is God Himself—He became flesh, became what we are and like unto us (the very reverse of that what He was and is from the beginning), and dwelt among us. And as God in Him made Himself actually present with us, we beheld His glory—glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. It is His history which came to pass, and from which the Evangelist brings out the very traits in which this, His Divine sonship, is preserved, tho misjudged, opposed, and rejected. He, the Messiah, who saved us from all sins, is, indeed, apprehended by His disciples and by a few lost people, like the Samaritan woman; but, from the beginning, He is not received by His people. He emphasizes that He is sent by the Father, not to judge and to punish the world, but to save it, and that faith in Him is the salvation of men. This way they will not like, because they can not bear the light, which through this mercy of God falls from Jesus upon their way. Hence the steady opposition to Jesus. It is this opposition chiefly that raises the question whether He is the Son of God, the Messiah. It is this test to which He Himself appeals. He who hears and knows the Father, and then sees when, where, and how Jesus speaks and works, must perceive also that Jesus is the Son of the Father, because He does and speaks nothing except that which He sees the Father do, or which the Father shows unto Him and inspires Him

to do and to say. Whoever is concerned to do God's will, where Jesus stands before Him and lays His claim to Him, shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, whether it brings the lost to God, whether it unites the soul with God or not. Because this is the sufficient test that Jesus seeks, He judges not—will only judge when the final day has come. Till then He bears and suffers whatever disbelief causes Him to bear. He plainly declares what kind of faith He seeks, a faith which unreservedly reconciles itself to His humble appearance, and in this very aspect of His lowliness finds the spirit of redemption. But His way becomes lonely and ever lonelier. He speaks of eternal life which He gives, and which those who believe in Him may find and have—the same gift which the synoptists name as the gift of salvation, for the sake of which the Kingdom of God is to be desired. But, as He is not understood and finds no faith when He speaks of the Father, so He also gains no credence for this promise of eternal life. He presents Himself to the people as the good shepherd, of whom the promise has spoken, yet it is as the shepherd who lays down His own life in order to save the flock. This does not fit with the picture which men cherished of a Messiah coming in power, who with His power, as at one stroke, makes an end to all oppression. Therefore, this figure also is not understood and the representation is not believed. None abides with Him except the few disciples whom He has found. To them He now promises the fruit of His life and suffering—the Holy Ghost—as in that promise of prayer recorded in the synoptics. The day is to come on which they shall

not only fully understand Him but know Him wholly, and in Him shall have all that they need. "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." But even the disciples as yet did not understand Him wholly and fully. They did not understand the word: "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." They do not yet comprehend the true tenor of His high-priestly prayer: "O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." But they understood how He said: "And this is life eternal; that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Only after they had experienced it all, after He had risen, and after the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, had illuminated them, did everything come plain to them. It became evident to them at length that Jesus had to descend into the deepest depth, and that this was the way in which He, the Father's only begotten Son, come down to us, betrayed, denied, forsaken even by His disciples, has proved Himself our Savior, Helper, King, and Lord of God's Kingdom. Now His word holds good which He said of His death: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." He is the Messiah, who proves Himself as such through the Holy Ghost, who glorifies Him and reproves the world of sin, and He shall once again return to search His congregation, and to fulfil His word concerning the one flock and the one shepherd.

Whether the form of the thoughts and the particu-

lar movement and progress of the narrative belong to the author or to Jesus Himself will hardly be ascertained with certainty. But that the tenor is authentic, and contains no contradiction to the synoptic record, ought to be clear as soon as one has apprehended the purpose of this record and these performances, and, by the side of it, the purpose and intent of the synoptic narrative. We understand that John from his recollections brings before his readers those very things in which the controversy about the person of Jesus comes to a crisis and a decision. We also understand that from the beginning he put everything under the aspect that regards Him as the eternal Son of God, incarnated for our sakes, about whom they contended. From this point of view He it is who suffered everything that was done against Him, was repudiated and rejected in order not to judge but to save. John discloses the deepest ground of history which his readers can comprehend. He presents Jesus as one to whom he had united himself with the other disciples from the beginning, on the ground of their belief in the Baptist's word that He is the Lamb of God. His word and work have set before John and the disciples great mysteries from the beginning which were to be solved only through the resurrection. This mystery consisted on the one hand in the irreconcilable contrast between His miraculous power and oneness with the Father, and, on the other hand, His lowliness, suffering, and patience. It involves the paradox that He, the Son of Man, was also the Son of God while He yet remained the Son of Man. When He has risen again, however, everything is clear. Every opposition to Him is re-

sistance against One who, from eternity and to eternity, is God and Lord, and the Savior of sinful men.

According to the established verdict of the Church (to which only in the most recent time has objection been made, as if the objection had established itself as self-evident) both accounts, that of the synoptists and that of John, are right. They do not preclude each other; the Johannean account was not given in order to supplement that of the synoptists, altho it does. In neither of these accounts does Jesus appear as a founder of religion, as a man who, through the fullness and accuracy of His knowledge of God, His unshaken faithfulness and sincerity, and the plenitude of His religio-ethical doctrine, had become the author of that religion that consists of true union with God, which alone is true religion. He does not figure in these accounts as a man who, as Harnack says, does not belong to the narration. According to all the extant accounts—according to all, that is, which we learn about Him from the mouth and from the service of His disciples and His first believers—He is not the *subject* but the *object* of religion. He teaches us to know the Father, He shows us the way to the Father—yes, He *is* the way, and also the truth, which one can trust forever, and He *is* the life. He who has Him and holds to Him is free from death, judgment, and perdition. He is the center of the Gospel. He brings in the Kingdom of God, and He brings that Kingdom to us. He not only proclaims the forgiveness of sin, He actually forgives sin. “As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them

that believe in His name." His word "It is I" is the really new thing which He has brought, the fulfilment of all the promises of God. The proof of His love—not of love in general—shows the actual fulfilment of the old commandment which till then had never yet been fulfilled. "Fear not, only believe," says He. He will die, and, indeed, He must die, in order to prove Himself to the full the Savior and helper of the world which killed Him.

But is all this correct now, and how are we to understand it? Shall we accept it just as it is here delineated to us, and say that He is our Savior? Have we here the picture of the real Jesus, or was He a man misunderstood by His disciples and His believing congregation, but who, through this very misunderstanding, had nevertheless become one who exercised the greatest influence upon humanity? Is the picture which we receive of Him only the product of an historical construction which, in spite of the contrast between Jesus and the Jews, has nevertheless originated under the influence of Jewish theology; or which, on the other hand, in spite of the fact that the mission to the heathen was first prohibited by Jesus Himself, and in spite of His severe words concerning the "dogs," has originated under the influence of heathenish ideas? Is the starting-point, even the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, not historic reality? Is it rather a product of Jewish eschatology, an epitome of the belief in an eternal life which one may represent to himself in this narrative form? Does it belong, as Harnack thinks, to the fabrication of elements of the system of salvation on the part of the Christian congregations who could not

otherwise represent to themselves the conviction that Christ was not immersed in death, but had passed to a higher life in glory, power, and honors?

We must now picture to ourselves the whole series of objections and doubts urged against the primitive Christian accounts of Christ and against the apostolic preaching concerning Him.

V

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS



THE question whether the historical reality does or does not correspond to the picture which the apostolic narrative sketches of the career of Jesus and His purpose or purposes is beset with considerable difficulties. These difficulties are so great that one can not actually attempt, still less accomplish scientifically, a correct and perfect critique of Jesus without taking them into consideration. I say scientifically, but in reality the question at issue can not be answered by scientific processes. The decision for or against will come about differently in each case. The argument is only supported and sustained by scientific discussions, which, after all, are only of an intellectual kind, whereas the question itself, according to its nature, is a religio-ethical one.

To begin with, we are concerned with that fact on which primarily depend the entire apostolic teaching as to the importance of Jesus for us, the whole delineation and exhibition of His life and activity and all the mysteries which we meet in it. This fact is the resurrection of Jesus. Is it a fact? Harnack denies this, because, aside from the question whether these accounts are trustworthy, it stands entirely out of analogy with all that otherwise takes place in connection with human history—yes, even out of analogy with those resuscitations of the dead which Jesus Himself, according to

our present records, has undertaken. Shall we be able to acknowledge such a fact, which is opposed to all conditions of our existence, to the conditions of all other occurrences? True, "I believe in a resurrection of the dead"; but is there really such a resurrection at the end of days, when the earth and the sea, hell and Hades, give back their dead; when "all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God"? This is, indeed, the expectation and representation of the resurrection; but can it hold its ground in the face of the sober and scientific observation of the facts of death and corruption? Shall we, therefore, not be obliged perhaps to accept the newest conception of Harnack, expressed by him in his "History of Dogma," according to which the Christian community itself produced this as well as other "facts of salvation," as they are called, by clothing their hope of the future eternal life in the thought of a resurrection of the dead? Did they, as Harnack thinks, make Him to whom they owed eternal life not only a partaker in this fabricated dogma of the resurrection, but the first who has in Himself experienced this great salvation, this everlasting deliverance? To be sure, according to all accounts before us (in which Harnack perceives, perhaps, eleven or more contributing hands), the tomb was empty. But if it really was empty—we know not whence comes this observation—this and the fact of a resurrection are still far apart, since Jesus, as Peter says, showed Himself as the risen One to none other than those whom God had chosen before as witnesses. A resurrection which, when it had just taken place, required faith

to be believed—how can it be a fact? For facts, says Harnack elsewhere (in his “History of Dogma”), can not be *believed* and *need* not to be believed—a proposition which indeed is not true, since there are many facts which one knows as very certain, altho one knows them only through belief. Besides, no one has seen the risen One in the mortal body, as it was when laid into the tomb. Then all had only “appearances,” from the women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus down to Paul. Among the women their experience is looked upon already as a vision, because they imagined they saw an angel. As to Mary Magdalene, she knew not the risen One. And what *else* are “apparitions,” “visages,” “visions,” than the gathering up of inner imaginings or experiences into a picture, in which that which we inwardly carry with us externalizes itself to us to be seen as something which existed outside us? For example (not taking into account other narrations which can hardly be considered accounts of eye-witnesses), Paul enumerates a number of such appearances. He writes (I. Corinthians xv : 3–8) : “For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; and that He was buried ; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ; and that He appeared to Cephas ; then to the twelve ; then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain till now, but some are faller asleep ; then He appeared to James ; then to all the apostles ; and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared to me also.” In connecting

the Epiphany which He shared on the way to Damascus with the earlier appearances, and placing these completely on a par with it, every reason, as it seems, disappears for regarding any of these appearances as something other than actual. They are not to be considered as mere pictures produced in the soul in some way, in clear, perceptible form, which present Jesus, living on in a higher plane of existence, if there be such, or as transfigured.

If this were the true account, then we have gotten rid of the miracle of the resurrection only at the price of another miracle still more incomprehensible—namely, the miracle of appearances that are in all main respects the same among all the persons reporting them, or which, at least, produce the same result, in that they give to the beholders the idea of the resurrection or religious conceptions of the same. On the night of the betrayal all the disciples are offended at Jesus. They abandon their faith that He is the Messiah, the Savior, and they all forsake Him and flee. The women, too, lose their faith, and come to the grave on the morning of the first day after the Sabbath to anoint His body. This is all that is left to them. There they hear that He is risen, or is said to have risen. Terror and fright seize them. The women flee from the tomb, for they were afraid. Thus also the disciples. “Certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive.” For to the disciples to whom they told these words “these words appeared as idle talk, and they disbelieved them.” When Jesus stood in

the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you!" they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit. In all cases, however, trembling and astonishment had turned into joy, especially, as the Gospel of Mark adds, after Jesus "had upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." How this change could have taken place inwardly unless the risen One had actually brought it about remains inexplicable, especially when we reflect that as yet "they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Such a theory would make the case of the apostle Paul on the way to Damascus the most remarkable of all. In his case any connecting points, with movements of His inner life, are the more out of question, since these movements, at the most, had perhaps declared to him that Jesus was right, and that he was forever wrong, forever lost. Such a state of mind was the opposite of that which could have suggested the resurrection. How are we to understand the quick, sudden change of the women, of the disciples, of the brethren? How explain the power of this newly acquired conviction of a "resurrection" so great that it called forth everywhere the same "appearance"—an appearance, however, which *never afterward repeated itself*—which certainly, in the missionary preaching as well as in the attestation of the Church of the first centuries, never was acted upon? We know, indeed, the infectious strength of hypnosis or suggestion; but does any one seriously believe he can explain the "appearances" of the risen One after the analogy of the ap-

pearances of Mary of Lourdes and others? The fact that the incipient disbelief was changed into belief, and that the missionary preaching from the beginning demanded only faith, and plainly enjoined upon the Christians belief in Him whom they have not seen (I. Peter i: 8), bear so decidedly against the explanation of "the appearances" which would make them the products merely of the inner life, that this can no more remain the real question. The theory that in these "appearances" we have merely pictures of the present condition of Jesus which God produces in the inner consciousness, implies an interference with our life processes that we are not prepared to believe. Such inner conceptions would be far more likely to dishearten us than to enlighten us as to the present state of Jesus. One needs only to know the psychology of the inner life as it is related to the living God, of the real inner life not merely imagined in the study, in order from the very start to reject such explanations of the faith in the resurrection as absolutely impossible.

That the resurrection of Jesus, however, is conceived as something till then never experienced, that it should be different from the awakening of Jairus' daughter, or of the young man at Nain, and also from the rising of Lazarus from the grave, is not inconceivable. Jesus did not rise as these, to die again, but He rose to triumph over every hostile power, even over hell and death. God has justified Him in the power of His spirit, and thus He became the first-born of the redeemed, whose redemption is for all who believe in Him, the surety for the coming

“liberty of the glory of the children of God.” It is His calling to be the Messiah, and as Messiah the powerful Savior and helper; therefore, He rose, He who was laid in the grave, and yet is a different One; afflicted with the scars of His cross, and yet living forever; whom even closed doors keep not from His own. Through Him has first been revealed: “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.”

To this now is added the testimony of the apostle Paul, which confirms as decisively as possible the accounts of the bodily resurrection of the crucified, dead, and buried Christ. How Paul was convinced of the resurrection of Christ we have heard already. That he did not conceive the resurrection as a figurative expression for transition into a better existence, for the lifting up to a more complete and higher form of existence, we learn from the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. He puts it completely on a par with the future resurrection for which we wait. This future resurrection he describes as the completion of the redemption in us through a final complete abolition of death by means of the renewing or spiritualizing of our corporeality, which, when it has been renewed, stands related to the present body as the fruit to the seed, while that which is earthly falls away with all weakness, sickness, and misery. So, according to Paul, did Jesus rise, and in His corporeality He appeared as the same who was laid into the grave, and yet different. This testimony of Paul rests upon his experience on the way to Damascus. It is consequently

much older than any of the evangelical accounts, and confirms the theory, therefore, that since the beginning of the Christian preaching there has been no other preaching than that of the crucified, dead, buried, and risen Christ. What remains of differences in these accounts concerns not the fact of the resurrection, nor the fact of the different appearances of the risen One, but only their order, the communication of them in the circles of the male and female disciples of Jesus. Even concerning the reception which the news of the resurrection found, the fear and the terror which it excited, the disbelief which at first it met, and which found its most decided and most prominent representative finally in Thomas, that disciple who foresaw the death of Jesus the most clearly and painfully. The accounts are just as accordant as they are concerning the change which the resurrection finally brought about.

How will we now decide in view of such attestation? The resurrection is, indeed, an unheard of event in the course of nature and history, and it only remains to acknowledge the fact in opposition to this natural course of things or to deny it resolutely. Accepting the attestation, we will have to renounce the explanation that has been offered for the fact that so soon after the death of Jesus men had come to the thought of the resurrection and to belief in the same. For the assertion that the inner thought of and faith in the exaltation of the dead Christ to a higher, better existence have clothed themselves in this historic form opposes the testimony of Paul and the testimony of the evangelists. But if we are to deny the historic resurrec-

tion, what remains, then? Can it indeed be possible that the entire world-historical appearance of Christianity has, after all, drawn its world-overcoming power from imagined apparitions, visions, phantoms, such as we meet with so often, even in the legends of modern history, and to which we never ascribe reality? If the resurrection is not a fact, no matter how one attempt its explanation, with the delusion concerning it is connected also the delusion concerning its importance. Paul especially expressed himself to this effect, that there is therefore only forgiveness of sins because Jesus has risen. Through the suffering and death of Jesus this remission is acquired for us; by His return into our life it is fulfilled or to be fulfilled on all those who believe in this Jesus. But if the resurrection is no return into life, what then? Where is the forgiveness? Or can a serious consideration of the suffering and death of Jesus lead to this remission, so that His meekness, remaining the same unto death, His pardoning love of enemies, His clinging to God and His faith in the victory of His love, shall assure us that we have not fallen under the vengeance of God, and may gratefully trust in His forgiveness? Yes, but who, then, is lost? The disciples, who knew Jesus' meekness and love and faithfulness, and yet forsook Him, or those who knew not Jesus and the wisdom of God? *Our sins forgiven!*—whoever will believe this, what does he need?

Starting from this conception of His death and resurrection, and going backward step by step, the entire evangelical account of the advent, work, and destiny of Jesus is depicted. Had He not been raised, then He

could not have appeared as Messiah, as chosen by God, endowed with powers of the upper world, and finally as King, appointed by God Himself; He could not have applied to Himself the fulfilment of all the Divine promises, and thereby the realization of the hope of Israel. Then the whole Messianic picture of the Gospels is wrong, and at the most an accommodation to the familiar ideas of Israel, in so far as such accommodation was at all possible. The demand of the people did not call forth a sharp opposition, as at the feeding of the five thousand. The new heart-cheering message which Jesus brought, which was to work and really did work, tho under diverse veilings, can then have consisted only in the knowledge (which had come to Him, or had been discovered by Him, or, if one wishes, had fallen to His lot) of the true essence of God as a Father loving His creatures, in place of the severe and inexorable judge represented by older laws of Israel. With this, we may say, had come to Him also the idea of the infinite worth of our soul, of each individual human soul, which nowhere else can find rest and peace, and can not otherwise grow strong for an energetic life, and love, and ministry, save by giving itself to and being seized by this knowledge of God which had first come to Jesus, and which was preached by Him and retained in spite of all the opposition of the world. It was also clear to Jesus that one can not serve God merely by fixed "statutory," required performances, but only by giving the whole life, the whole person, to the service of the brethren. For we *see* the brethren. They are creatures of God like ourselves. God we see not.

Therefore to serve the brethren, that they have something of this better life, means to serve God through them.

If this be the whole account of the mission of Jesus, only that can be historical which is communicated to us of His teaching about the Kingdom of God and of His doctrine about the Father. Everything else but this must be deducted—the influence under which the informants communicated their views and narratives, the traditions of the community, the notions current in the community that have proceeded, for the most part, from Israel and from Israelitish theology. It is, indeed, not easy to separate in the accounts that which is genuine from that which is spurious, since in the accounts of Jesus many things are contained which are derived from contemporary notions—*e.g.*, in the so-called eschatological discourses about His return, that which He says of the devil, of demons and of angels, who are not exactly figures of speech with Him, but are represented in parables under other images and are interpreted by Him.

But the knowledge of God's fatherhood, of which mention has been made, and which, as we must think, has an entirely different meaning from that which we derive from the statements of Scripture; the knowledge He is said to have acquired of the infinite worth of a human soul, and with it of the treasures called "heavenly"; His alleged knowledge of love and service—these must give way to that other meaning of the expression "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven" which we find in the first parable of the sower. It is purely a spiritual king-

dom, a purely spiritual government of God. It seems, indeed, not to harmonize with the instruction to pray for deliverance from all evil, and, in the directly following parable of the wheat and the tares, appears to be mixed with specifically Jewish notions of the end and the final judgment. It may be difficult for us to separate the word, or rather the meaning, of Jesus from such additions and supplements as belong to the contemporary notions and to the misunderstandings of the disciples, but this must be undertaken. This is the more necessary, since with it is connected the animus of the conflict between Jesus and His critics—the Pharisees and the almost entirely disbelieving priesthood. By such discrimination alone can be explained what otherwise surprises Harnack as Christ's "going almost too far" in His predilection for sinners. Jesus, it is true, had a "predilection" for those who were otherwise despised as "sinners." He condescended to place Himself on an equality with the heathen who did not belong to the people of God. He finds His disciples, and selects them from the circles to which men did not commonly award the claim to respect and honor. On the supposition we are considering, Christ is indeed not the Savior in the sense of the apostolic account of Him or of the whole New Testament from the first page to the last. He was not a founder of religion in the sense of having been a teacher and lawgiver, like Moses, or Zarathustra, or Buddha, or Confucius. He is in this theory a founder of religion because He was the first indeed who knew and lived the religion of truth and of love, proclaimed the same, and so promoted it by life and doctrine that,

among all the rubbish already heaped up at the very beginning, and increased throughout the centuries, His truth is still cognizable. It is discerned, to be sure, only by the experienced, whose task it is now publicly to defend and propagate this newly acquired knowledge in confident trust in the power of truth. For, in fact, Jesus is, or was, not the object but the subject of religion, and there follows from this the critical axiom : *Jesus does not belong to the narrative.*

To this view another consideration should be expressed. In trying to trace back the picture of Christ and of His career to features which are alone historically possible, we are not allowed to acknowledge Him as miracle worker. Not as if He had done nothing of that which is recorded of Him as miracle. As an historian, one must inquire the reason and the motive lying behind ideas as he finds them extant in the accounts of the miracle. But these accounts are, on the other hand, apparently so mixed with absolute impossibilities (for example, the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Gennesaret) that we are hardly able to undertake, in all details, a clear and correct separation of that which actually took place from the legendary additions. It is to be acknowledged that every personal free action is a miracle, but our thinking is so dominated by the constant relation between essential things and their phenomena that it is a paradox, inexplicable if considered as a product of a natural course of things, when we conceive personal action interfering to make use of nature outside the ordinary limits of this connection. It is, nevertheless, to be acknowledged that a personality so unitary, and, therefore, so spirit-

ually powerful as that of Jesus, is also capable of entirely different performances from those that we can do—performances which so far appear to us as miracles, as we are not able, or not yet able, to perform them ourselves. To this class belong the proofs of His healing strength and power on those whose life was disturbed in consequence of the environment of nature in which they stood. But these are, after all, not miracles. They do not lie beyond the measure of the humanly possible. Tho we may not be able to refer to similar events in the history of humanity within our reach, and must acknowledge that such cures, in which recovery takes place as soon as the word is spoken, are, for us, outside of our possibilities, yet such a power of the human mind is at least conceivable, in which one may not merely triumph over one's own suffering, but also helps others. To be sure, it would doubtless be necessary to excite in those who are to be helped life similar to that in the healer, in order to accomplish this effect, and just this is the thing wanting in most miracle accounts. This seems evident in the cures of most of those whose minds were suffering, or who were mentally deranged. Here we are not obliged to confine ourselves to the conception held by the people, by the evangelists, and probably also by Jesus Himself, that the origin of those sicknesses is through demoniacal possession. Operation of spirits belonging to another world we know nothing about. Demoniacal possession, therefore, does not exist, but a spiritual bondage, which, tho not in all, yet in many cases, yields to a powerfully working, sound will. Then, to be sure, such necessary accounts as these: "He

healed them all" and "As many as touched were made whole," fall to the ground; and it remains strange that not one case is mentioned in which Jesus' power failed, whereas a case is mentioned in which the disciples could not help. But these affirmations belong to the coloring of the account we are considering. We are hardly prohibited from also supposing instances in which Jesus could not help. In such cases we may suppose that in His wisdom and love He would have directed the desire of the sick, or of their relatives, to something else than to healing. As soon as we have clearly settled it that the greatest of all miracles, the resurrection of Jesus, has no historical ground, all the elements in the miracle accounts that transcend the measure of the human, or of that which is humanly possible, disappear. For the historical inquirer can well concede that miraculous things that cause astonishment, and are, for the time being, inexplicable, have taken place somewhere and anyhow, and that these only become intelligible at a later stage of the development of the human intelligence and upon a more complete domination of nature, if we attain to such; but real miracles he can never and nowhere acknowledge. He knows *mirabilia* but not *miracula*. It is no dogma, but fact, that there are not and can be no miracles. Miracles drop out completely not merely from the orderly constitution of nature, but also out of every historical connection, and anything that falls out of this connection can only be a product of legend or fiction, never of actuality.

To this category also belongs what is reported of Christ's struggle with Satan immediately after the

baptism in the Jordan—one of the plainest indications of the fashion in which mythological images originate through the externalizing and hypostatizing of views, which in themselves manifest nothing whatever of superhuman life and essence.

But if in Christ's advent, life, and work nothing superhuman or extra human is to be found, then the narrative of His supernatural generation, of His fatherless birth, and the virginity of His mother, falls out of history as a matter of course. This, too, is but an effort to explain His supposed superhuman coming, His seemingly more than human essence, as is also the Pauline deduction of the self-emptying of Him who was God and became man, and the Johannean description of the Word which was forever with God, yes, was God Himself, and became flesh, as we are. As a matter of course, the historical inquiry can award no claim to truth either to such narratives as are found in Luke and Matthew, or to such theologumena as we meet with in Paul and John. The simple observed reality of the commonly known human essence was taken as the normal aspect of it. It was not understood, therefore, how from this ordinary human nature such a man as Jesus could be normally produced and born—One so endowed, so pure. It followed from this that He was regarded as God who had become man. Upon this theory was built the idea of the deification of our nature. But whoever once was man was man completely. He is born like us, begotten of a human father, born of a human mother, fruit of the nature-connection of humanity. In each member of our race the age-long life of humanity reproduces itself in such

a way that it proves itself to be united not only with the life of all times, but with the formative elements of its environment. Thus in the case of Jesus; He is a born Jew, as Luther has emphasized it in his masterly writing: "That Jesus Christ is born a Jew," but a Jew who received into Himself the entire religious impetus of life accumulated in all time, kept Himself free from all aberrations and perversions, grasped with all seriousness and all fidelity His religio-ethical task as His life's calling, realized it and shaped it. Perhaps, withal, under great influence, but perhaps independently of it, He deepened His knowledge of God and strengthened His hold upon God, so that He grew into complete harmony with it, and thus matured to the estate of that religious genius which He remains to this day, unique in our human history.

Thus, and thus only, is to be explained Christianity, this unique phenomenon in the history of humanity—a religion which was able, without support of the civil powers, to become in a short time authoritative for the ancient world, and which to-day still wins the nations by awakening and satisfying interests that can not be estimated and measured in the light of any earthly proportions. Christianity is religion. It offers connection with God, but neither for an earthly prize nor for earthly objects. Tho many sins have been committed and are still being committed in the name of Christianity, it always has appeared to be the purest and the most effective where its devotees have sacrificed worldly utility and have sought it only on account of the craving of the soul for God. For "Thou hast created us for Thee, and our heart is restless in us

till it rests in Thee." This resting in God, that we may receive power for everything which it is incumbent upon us to do and to suffer in our earthly life, bound to the clod, is the interest which Christianity satisfies. It satisfies it through Christ's preaching : (1) the fatherhood of God ; (2) the endless worth of a human soul ; and (3) love and service as our life's task. Everything else is accessory, not belonging to the case, *e.g.*, the supposed miracle-working of Christ with which His fame invested itself, and which thereby may have contributed to the first propagation of Christianity. But that whereby He actually operated and still operates are these three great truths, the everlastingly established pillars of life conformed to the image of God, and—if the expression be allowed—existing in paradisaic blessedness.

To be sure, Christianity, so far as our knowledge reaches back, has from the beginning been preached not so much as a Gospel of Jesus as a Gospel about Jesus, and in the Gospel of Jesus, Jesus had the same position and importance as in the Gospel concerning Jesus. But this fact, essential as it is in its bearing upon the world-historical appearance of Christianity as the religion of the Church, belongs, after all, only to the mythology of the Christian preaching. The real and lasting substance of the Gospels which forms the underground and background of this mythology is this: the knowledge of the eternal essence of God as the Father of His human children, and the knowledge of the ever unchanging and unchangeable relation between God and the world, with which to familiarize ourselves, and into which to grow, must be our task,

since now it has been made known by Jesus. Every advance is made by way of the intellect. From it really proceed the determination of the will, tho perhaps only after long and serious vacillations. In this influencing of the will by the action of the intellect is explained the temporary authorization of the reception of such mythological elements into the Christian accounts as the effectuation of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ's death, its accomplishment by His resurrection, and His lasting intercession for us by His exaltation at the right hand of God, whither he went to intercede Himself for us as a priest before God. For now "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." In all this the main thing is that which is effected and accomplished by such preaching—namely, a knowledge of God and of the Divine life. When both these things are accomplished, the adventitious aid by which one has come to this degree of development must and will fall. They must be tolerated as "props," for the time being necessary to many, but they are no longer necessary to the strong, accomplished minds which have found or received the "powers," and are therefore able to do without the "props." It is something of this kind that Harnack means to express when he says that the "powers" and "props" come from the same necessity, and have the same object; as long as there are those, and there may always be such, who need the "props," these "props" will remain. But the cultured man can not use them because they give offense to his so-called scientific convictions of the

limited form and bounds of our present existence, of the unlimited God ruling over it as providence or eternal order. The religious, cultured man does not need them, because he has without them the truth, upon the knowledge of which religion depends. In maintaining thus the difference between a religion of "powers" and a religion of "props," of an esoteric and an exoteric form of Christianity, the cultured man, able to command the "powers," is not hindered from living in the same belief and in the same love as those who need "props" to reinforce their love, and he is at one with those who need no crutches. That on the one side he feels himself more drawn to those who share his view is outweighed on the other side by the ineradicable desire and joy to be a child with all the children, and even to regard himself as a child with these mythological notions.

Thus Jesus the Christ is the Messiah in a different sense from that in which the Jews expected Him, and in a different sense, moreover, from that understood by the disciples, and in general not only by the first believers, but by all Christendom. He is the Messiah as the redeemer from a religion that reckons with false motives and aims, as the deliverer of humanity from its terror of an angry deity, who had to be appeased first with gifts and sacrifices before He would be gracious. He is the Messiah as the originator of a new order, the discoverer and fosterer of the true religion, who first knew the truth, accepted and practised it with animation, and lived it to the end with faultless faithfulness. Having become one with God in grateful adoring faith, God has chosen and

called Him, with His motives and His objects, to live the life of God on earth. Thus men may not only know in Him and His conduct of life what a God they have, but they also have in His conduct the very conduct of God Himself. God through Him and in Him stands related to us—through Him because God completely fills Him; in Him because Jesus has completely entered into the life of God. Thus, God found in Jesus the man in whom and through whom He stands related to the others, and through whom and in whom the others also have their right relation to God. That Jesus has lived the life of God on earth, that He was not only united with God in His thoughts and aims, and in His relation toward the others, but was, in fact, as one with God, this is, indeed, a conception not easy to entertain, especially so long as one still adheres to individuality, absoluteness, and freedom of the personal God. Harnack himself would perhaps not so express himself, but rather would prefer the rationalistic views, tho not perhaps the language of the eighteenth century. But we take up this view, tho differing from that of Harnack, because it does more justice to the advancing importance of Jesus even for the later generations. "Christ lived the life of God on earth." This idea is certainly hard to conceive when we regard God not only as the unapproachable background of the life of Jesus, but as the true power which moved and personally filled Him and made the man Jesus to be the abode of God's self-revelation for us. But is the difficulty of this conception greater than the difficulties which the other idea of God, as the power ruling the world in absolute freedom of His love, involves? Are

not the difficulties which lie in the idea of reconciliation still greater? Does the thought of reconciliation, if it means something else than the change of our disposition toward God, harmonize any better with the thought of a God exalted above space and time, therefore also independent of change—yes, even of the influence of our conduct? And is not that adoration which springs from the revelation in Christ of the life of God in Him far better, more worthy of man and God, than the “prayer in the name of Jesus, through which we seek the Father’s face”?

We have brought before us the picture of Christ as it is formed on the basis of the critical processes now going on. Every one will concede that in essentials it is correctly drawn. It is particularly the picture of Him which Harnack has drawn before his hearers. We ask: Is this drawing scientifically authorized? Harnack says that his intention has been to obtain this picture by way of historical criticism of the sources. Does his criticism really comprise a historical critique? He does not examine the sources and their value according to a historical method. He decides on the contents of his authorities neither from their differences among themselves, nor from their differences with ulterior authentications and communications, nor does he let pass their agreement. Of course, actually we have no exactly contemporaneous sources, but some that are nearly contemporaneous, which, according to the declarations of some of their authors, go back at least to the testimonies of eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses. Could we do away also with these sources as being, after all, affected by the standpoint and attitude

of their authors thirty, fifty, or sixty years after the events, we have still to dispose of the testimony of the apostle Paul, whose declarations coincide in the most essential points with the accounts of those later sources. These sources, however, and also the Pauline declarations, yield a different picture from that drawn by the modern critic, whose traits are not even shaded through Jewish sources. Now the picture of Christ to be derived from the sources agrees in no wise with any event otherwise known from history, or that belongs to history, or is possible from the ordinary courses of history. On this account Harnack says, and many with him, that this picture is unhistorical.

The significance of the question may, therefore, be stated thus: Is that what Jesus was, did, and still does to be accounted antecedently incredible because the historical analogies are wanting for it? It is admitted that Jesus stands absolutely unique in history. No one is like Him, either in His department of religion or in any other respect. So much the more it is now required that His activity shall completely conform to laws of our existence, and be put in close harmony with nature and history, if it is to be of importance to us. A being who is above this harmony and system of nature and history can not influence us, who always live and think in the terms of this system. So argues the critic. But even if it should be admitted that Jesus in all respects must be regarded as belonging to the system of nature and history whose product and producer we ourselves are, still the question would remain whether the founder of Christianity, as He is called, has not differently regarded and differently

solved this problem? He was concerned about our union with God. Is it correct to say that we obtain union with God because in His person, by word and life, He shows us the way? Or is His claim correct that still more is required than merely such a showing of the way?

Harnack omits to ask this, and instead he proceeds with his argument that the image of Christ, of His life and work, His passion, death, and resurrection, as found in the sources, must be regarded as unhistorical, because it does not connect itself with the laws of all other existence and the events that go on in the life of humanity. From this ground, therefore, he rejects one thing or accepts another that his sources give him, and opposes the apostolic preaching of the Gospel about Jesus in its most fundamental points. The point, however, which is thus decisive for his critique, and which determines his critical treatment throughout, is in reality nothing else than a dogma. Under cover of the authority of his name, he calls his treatment a historical critique; we, on the other hand, must refuse this critique as being dogmatically biased. This dogmatic tendency Harnack himself admits by still accepting things and events which, as he says, a time more advanced in the knowledge of the natural system of things not only ought to reject, but in all probability will reject. Thus he prepares himself for an ever greater emptying of his Christ picture, not only, as he thinks, of every super-human trait, but of every relation, even the remotest, to that Christ to whom centuries and millenniums now have prayed.

Meanwhile, in refusing Harnack's critique as dogmatically biased, we do not thereby mean to affirm that it is a mistake to approach our sources with dogmatic criticism. On the contrary, *only dogmatic criticism can decide the question*, and all historical criticism receives its power and the direction of its process from dogmatic criticism, not, to be sure, from the presupposition of a certain dogma, but from criticism whose first and most serious question is whether the view and estimation of the person and history of Jesus that is expressed in the sources is authorized or not. This question, however, can only be answered as an ethico-religious question.

Historical criticism can the less decide, since the question is whether or not the history with which we are here concerned stands actually outside of all other history, and thus differs from all other history. The Christ whom the apostolic account describes has for His object to save, not humanity in general, least of all the wise, the noble, the mighty of earth, but the sinners and the whole world of sinners. Has Jesus solved this problem? Has He solved it for me and in me? Could He and can He solve it? This question can not at all be historically decided, tho it concerns a fact which is either real or an illusion. But in order to decide this question it requires not a "scientific" disinterestedness, but it is to be put and treated, as Harnack also treats it, as a question of the most burning personal interest. One must enter into a personal relation to Jesus, and that not a relation in which, by certain claims which he makes or repudiates, one restricts from the very beginning the influence of Jesus

on men ; but where one examines the records to ascertain whether the effect which proceeds from that influence is a redeeming one or not, and whether or not this Jesus, as He is here " described before our eyes," has redeemed us, and still redeems from the ban of sin, of guilt, of death, and the judgment.

Harnack has omitted this task. He has not even mentioned it to his readers. From the very start he has regarded it as the self-evident standpoint of historical criticism that all essential features by which the Christ-picture of the apostolic prediction characteristically detaches itself from every other historical picture are not only unessential, but for the most part incorrect. Only those features are essential and correct in which His figure, aside from its superior endowment, its faithfulness, its vocation, the fulfilment of it, appears as not at all different from our own. But before we prosecute on our part this task omitted by Harnack, and examine the credibility of the apostolic or New Testament conception of the person, history, and work of Christ, let us examine and estimate the merit of the picture of Christ drawn by Harnack.

VI

ANTI-CRITIQUE



DOES this figure of the non-risen Christ, whose body was left to decay while His spirit went to God, satisfy us? The figure of the perfectly pure One, of the inspired, loving, patient teacher, of the faithful leader of the mighty Lord and Master, who indeed has not proved Himself by actual miracles, but continually proves Himself by what is more than miracles, by His power to attract us to Himself—does this satisfy us? It must indeed be a great influence which He exercises, a powerful effect proceeding from Him, when He urges us to believe what He has believed in the way He believed it, when He animates us to love as He loved, when He strengthens us to triumph over all opposition of the world as He triumphed—namely, through a quiet, patient suffering, in reliance on the final victory of truth over all meanness, envy, and obstinacy of the world! Is this not sufficient for a reformation of the world—more necessary to-day, perhaps, than ever? Is it not sufficient for a world which, as it seems, is to-day more susceptible to the truth than ever, even tho not to the truth of the church-preaching?

We ask not whether this Christ-picture satisfies our claims. Human claims are often very small and trifling, and the ideas by which we are moved are often very poor. This is well illustrated in most of the

political parties of our day. How poor are the claims which they make to the understanding and will of those who belong to them! How easily are they satisfied with words which mean nothing, and which only serve to weaken the impression which the opponent might make! How superficially are questions treated which ought to stir society to its profoundest depth to seek a solution which the shallow journalist certainly can not give! But still more do we perceive this in the history of religious movements themselves, which are but seldom influenced by original and great thoughts, but mostly follow the suggestions of small minds, and finally lose themselves in the sand. How poor are the religious and ethical fundamental ideas of Roman Catholicism—the idea, for instance, of making redress for our sins by the confession of the mouth to the satisfaction of the work and affliction of the heart; or the idea that an especially distinguished Christian may have acquired a stock of holiness; or the idea of the mediatorship of the priests! How easily intelligible is the gradual degeneration of the Christian faith and the religious life by falling back into the lower stages of heathenish views of life and death, of the Deity and His demands on men, their aims, and their ability to perform! And yet how tenaciously and vitally the priesthood and people cling to these views, and how easily are even evangelical Christians often dazzled by the little allegorical imagery and formalism of Catholicism! No, it is not from a consideration of that which we claim that we can pass a judgment on the worth or worthlessness of views, persons or events. This is often done, and the judgment is influenced by

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

the greatness or smallness, the force or weakness, of the claim. We ask, therefore, more correctly : *Does that Christ-picture that criticism draws satisfy our wants?*

First of all we must consider the wants with whose satisfaction we are concerned. What are they? Are they spiritually intellectual, or are they esthetic wants? These are comparatively easy to be satisfied. A figure like the Biblical and ecclesiastical Christ gives the greatest stimulus to our intellect. From such a consideration the sketch or construction has been undertaken in which every superhuman and every extra human feature is erased, and only a perfect, all-comprising human being is left, tho this is enhanced in the highest degree. Paul not only knew but openly declared that the preaching of Christ has unendurable severities for those who seek after wisdom, but who are not able to comprehend the Divine wisdom surpassing in its heights all human wisdom, and therefore regard it as foolishness. Nevertheless, and just on this account, He demanded faith for His preaching; not a faith relying on the authority of the apostle (how should he demand of the Gentiles the acknowledgment of His authority?), but a faith which itself convinced of the truth of His preaching in spite of all gainsaying arguments, a faith which silenced all counter-arguments by overwhelming considerations, and accepted the word of the apostle. It is evident that the tenor of the apostolic preaching is in the strongest opposition to the movement of our thoughts, and that our experience rejects this preaching as unnecessary or in the most favorable case as impossible.

Nevertheless, it shows itself to be wisdom, tho not a wisdom set in comparison with a wisdom expressing itself differently and coming to other results, but only a wisdom by which our spiritually intellectual wants are fully satisfied. But such satisfaction depends on the satisfaction of other wants, which everywhere precede the intellectual wants. These are our moral wants and, closely connected therewith, our religious.

But our moral wants are different. Some say that they need the Biblical, or, as they express it, the ecclesiastical Christ, for their peace and for the living of a blessed, vigorous life. Others deny this, and say, if they need a Christ at all, they want such a one as we endeavored to delineate after the model of Harnack and others, as distinguished from the Biblical Christ. Who decides? The former, as it appears, are vigorous natures not knowing at all the feeling of weakness, of infirmity, of moral disability to work, to say nothing of the sense of the greatness of their guilt. Never, indeed, have they come to utter the sigh: "Whither shall I go because I am oppressed with many and great sins?" Such men admit that there are men who have put themselves outside of the peace of human society, be it through the fault of their education, or through the circumstances in which they are, or through the nature of their environment, tho in all cases through some guilt of their own. What becomes of them, what future awaits them after this life, no one knows. As long as one is not molested or hurt by them, one is inclined to be indulgent, provided only they are made harmless in a permissible manner. One

claims for himself indulgence, for "man errs as long as he strives," and "we all stumble."

But we only need a degree of indulgence, which is offered to every serious and honest endeavor, offered to finite man in his circumscribed finite limitation, offered over against his capacity to err, as a pardon not only for his belated conditions, but also for his positive errors, if he only tries to amend them and himself. If the representatives of this much-propagated view can get on with a Christ who is nothing essentially different from themselves, except, possibly, more perfect, more ideal, more pious; if with the Biblical Christ, the Christ of the New Testament accounts, they will have nothing to do, but are in the most decided conflict, not only from intellectual but also moral reasons, who proves to them that they are wrong? Who proves to them that, in their judgment of themselves and their verdict about Christ, they are wrong? Who proves that those deeply afflicted, deeply humbled natures, conscious of their guilt, seeking only mercy and forgiveness, like the publican, are right in their judgment of themselves and in seeking after mercy, with their faith in the mercy of Christ and the love of God alone?

And yet it must be possible to convince every one of moral or ethico-religious truth, tho it is not meant thereby that every one will be convinced. For moral and religious truth reckons with freedom. Whether a man will acknowledge moral and religious truth which concerns him is a matter of his will. If he will not, he puts himself indeed in opposition to the truth which has been attested to him, but he sees him-

self at once obliged, in order not to be regarded as intellectually lower, to establish intellectually his opposition, and thus to maintain an apology for his conduct. That this apology then takes the form of an attack upon the supposed truth, its adherents and representatives, is not surprising. It were surprising if it were otherwise. On this account are all apologies of truth fruitless for those who are resolved not to acknowledge the truth, or fruitless so long as the conflict against such the decision lasts. A cogent argument which abrogates freedom of decision and which is completely demonstrative, like an argument in mathematics or the natural sciences, does not and can not exist in the present case. This is not, however, because the truth is questionable ! The propositions which are concerned here are more important than all propositions of mathematics and natural sciences, tho they require an entirely different method of proof; and that they can only be believed and accepted by the free acknowledgment of the will is precisely their value and loftiness. Love with which we are loved by men can not be absolutely demonstrated ; all its proofs may be regarded as selfishness. But how poor is the life of him who believes not in love !

From such considerations we may safely assert the proposition upon which the argument depends—viz., that it must be possible so to describe the moral wants, the wants of the sinful man, to fulfil which Christ appeared, that one can generally decide whether he can be satisfied by this picture of Christ or that. For Christianity, with its gift, the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and the power of redeeming grace, comes forward with

claim to credibility not only just as great as the claim of the law, but even greater, or, more correctly speaking, still more powerful. Whether it is believed is another matter. We therefore put the question thus: Does the Christ, as we have endeavored to portray Him, according to the old rationalistic and according to the most recent views, satisfy the moral wants?

In the outset it seems as if He did satisfy them. He shows us a harmoniously perfect, moral life satisfied in itself, whose ideality and idealism attract us irresistibly and with powerful, yes, with too powerful, force direct us into the same paths in which Jesus went. Who could and would not follow where such a predecessor tells and shows us the way? With the most careful observance of the so-called statutory law, one by no means satisfies the absolutely cogent demands of moral truth on the whole life by free obedience or by a life burning with love. Tho it may be difficult for us to follow Jesus in this way, we try it, and we derive ever new courage from looking at Him and from His example. To be sure, He never fell, and he alone has fully lived the truth and practised it faithfully. We fall again and again, but this is indeed the lasting difference between Him and us: His totality and our incompleteness, His faithfulness and our unfaithfulness, His constancy and our ever-repeated falling, His stability and our continual vacillations. But on just this very account we need Him, in order to be influenced by Him again and again, and to go again and again to be shown the path where looking backward only detains and hinders, along which one only advances by continually looking upward and forward.

Jesus shows us what man can be and do, and, tho we can not be what He was, or do what He did, and shall never accomplish it as long as we live, we nevertheless can follow Him. For this reason He was man, wholly man. He shows us a Kingdom of purely spiritual objects ; He calls it the Kingdom of God, a realm in which we do God's will or the whole truth, and serve in love ; in which we are loved of God and are the beloved of God. He is a power that freely displays Himself in men who have risen from the dark, natural ground of their existence, and have suffered themselves to be lifted up to this luminous height. To live by this power and to live for this life raises us above all the misery of daily existence. Thus one becomes inwardly lord over the world. Tho we belong to the world, yet we rise above it. Thus one learns to endure what he suffers from the world, as Jesus bore it, without being turned away from the truth of his motives and objects. For from this inner height of our freedom from the world, and in our dominion over the power of its bondage, nothing and no one can throw us down as long as we will not yield. Thus Jesus teaches, thus His example helps us to live and suffer, and to be and remain free. He teaches us to love our fellow combatants as well as our opponents, who are our opponents only because the glory of Christ and of His way has not yet risen to them. He convinces us that to live and to love belong together, that to love means only to live, that only that life is worth anything which is a life in love, and that only a life in love has in itself the promise and the surety of eternity. For we have our life only from each other and only with each

other, and therefore we have it only by loving. All other life is only semblance, and becomes a lie and must perish. Only this life in love is real life, only this is satisfied, eternally satisfied, and therefore has everlasting existence. This life is a blessed life, in which one so lives for the other that each thinks no longer of himself, but only of others. Whether eternity is an everlasting continuation of this life, or whether it is only the freedom, satisfaction, and an independence from the world, and the change and misery that is to be expressed through it, is of no consequence. For in this consists the satisfaction and blessedness: that one needs nothing more and thinks no more of himself, but only of others.

Thus Jesus lived, one with God and one with us. He is on this account not only our Father but the power which to-day still carries us along and draws men to Him, and will so long as the world shall exist, altho He was but a man. But these, His after-effects, are perfectly unique, corresponding to the uniqueness of His person and of His calling—after-effects which can not be found again and can not repeat themselves, tho they are only after-effects of His historical appearance. For this was His calling, to stand as the first and unique witness of God in history as a perpetual reminder of God, and as the everlasting leader—yes, more than leader—for us. He showed us by His life what it means to be man, and thus, and only thus, how the individual and the individual soul has endless worth.

Incessantly Jesus draws us with Him into the path where He walked, and which He opened and showed

to us. He shows us God as the loving Father ; He helps us to lay hold of Him who wishes and desires nothing else than that we live for the brethren, and thereby for Him, for His Kingdom and its objects, and serve them fully and wholly with all joy and willingness. In doing this, in wishing this, in procuring this, in following Jesus, becoming one with Jesus, pursuing this way, as He has been one with us before ever we went this way, we now act and walk according to His will and toward His objects. For these we now exist, and thus we are really one in spirit with Him. Then we are sure of His forbearance at our defects, our shortcomings, our wavering. For, tho fallen, we remain not on the ground ; in the strength of the inspiration, yes, the irresistible moral urging, which proceeds from Him, we always have power to get up again and indefatigably to go on. We condemn our defects, our vacillation, and wavering. On this ground, should not forgiveness be sure to us ?

On this wise, in this way, which we can hardly delineate more seriously than is here done, this Christ-picture, this picture of the Man who has lived and who has come to His goal, of the spiritual ruler of humanity through His teaching and life for all times, is to satisfy our moral needs. But what pity that *sin is no more sin !* It is finitude, error, imperfection, weakness, mistake, *but no sin !* In this view one reckons not with a living God, differing from us, before whose judgment-seat we all must appear, nor with the God who, under no circumstances, wills the sin. Sin and finitude, sin and weakness, sin and error are near to each other, and weakness and error originated first

through sin, finitude and limitedness became first sinful through sin. But sin itself is a direct opposition to the will of God, is that which God does *not* will, which He denies, which He opposes, wherever and however it may assert itself. For a time, perhaps, one may resign himself to the dream that this Christ-picture satisfies; but in truth it only satisfies him who, in the first place, remembers not the living God, who needs not God and prays not to Him. It satisfies only such fundamental ethical views as we meet with in large circles, views which make all morality come out after the law of development from primitive conditions, which teach that man becomes man by lifting himself from the dark, material ground from which He is said to have ascended. In short, this Christ-picture, this reverse of all development, this revolution in place of evolution, satisfies only views which know not a fall. But where one is in earnest to follow that which this picture is to show us, and where one is in earnest to reckon with consciousness—nay, with the belief that we finally have, nevertheless, to deal with the living God, before whom we must give an account for our deeds, our thoughts and our desires—there this picture comes upon painful experiences. The experience recurs which one of the greatest of our race once expressed in words that to this day, excepting in some small variation, are yet recognized as sad—yes, as most sad truth. It is experience which we can not do away with by the remark that it can not claim universal validity because it is connected with special aberrations—namely, with the aberrations of Pharisaism. I mean that experience of the apostle Paul,

which he describes in Romans vii : " For to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. I find, then, the law that, to me who would do good, evil is present, . . . bringing me into captivity under the law of sin, which is in my members." God is never and nowhere satisfied with the good will, and God's law had and has the special task to urge upon the whole people the knowledge of sin. But what is to take place when, as Paul says again, every mouth is stopped, and all the world is brought under the judgment of God and is obliged to undergo the punishment? Do we, then, still believe we are able to rise to the level of this Christ-picture, and forget what is behind, in order to go forward with ever new resolution and zeal? Is guilt merely a thought which one can give up, or a ban which presses us down and keeps us down, even tho we should like to forget it a thousand times?

We have a remarkable document from the writings of Pharisaic Judaism, coming from the years immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem—the so-called fourth book of Esdras. The author frankly acknowledges the judgment of God upon Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem, altho he wrongly ascribes the motive. He also acknowledges the irrefragable moral duty of Israel to realize the law of God, tho he does assert it in relation to himself and to Israel. Still, more zealously—more zealous than ever before—the people must follow after the fulfilment of the law. Then will they know, what every wise and prudent man knows already of himself, that we sin under compulsion. Sin dwells for once in us. This is Adam's fault, through whom


sin came into the world. "O thou Adam, what hast thou done?" was the complaint of the righteous. On account of the existing sin, God has made known the law (for the legislation is regarded as the promulgation of righteousness, not the putting of it into effect), that the children of Israel should live as closely as possible in accordance with the law. If they do this they come to judgment with a treasure of good works, which are balanced against their sins, and have the prospect that God will pardon them. To be sure, they have no certainty of pardon, because they do not live on a forgiveness already realized, but only in the hope of forgiveness. Whoever receives this forgiveness will wonder at the greatness of God's mercy. But God is still merciful, and to whom should He be merciful if not to those who, by obedience to His will, have labored for mercy? For He is the merciful Judge: "For if He did not pardon them that were created by His word, there would, peradventure, be very few left in an innumerable multitude" (4 Esdras, vii : 139, 140).

Do you think this solution of the question, which must necessarily engage every honest, aspiring man, to be correct? And do you think the answer has been given to our question, whether the new and newest Christ-picture satisfies those needs whose satisfaction we seek? Certainly not! But it only expresses in uncolored form that which is thought by those who dream a forgiveness of sins or of failings on the basis of an endeavor to follow Jesus. For whether the law or the modern Christ-picture, they amount to the same, and the modern Christ-picture would at the most make the moral demand appear deeper, more comprehensive,

and, therefore, also more difficult. The animation, however, which is awakened by such a powerful type as Jesus—provided it is awakened at all—will soon turn into the desperate and despairing question : “ Oh, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ? ” Tho the modern Christ may satisfy the current views of the cultured, and of all those who absolve themselves, *He certainly does not satisfy our wants.* Will the Christ of the New Testament satisfy them ?

VII

FAITH AND HISTORY

S SOON as we approach more closely to the question of the credibility of the evangelical history the very important consideration arises: Of what use is a belief in past history, since, as far as Christian efficiency is concerned, if it is to have security and authority, it depends on present truth existing and prevailing from eternity and for eternity. At the most we could only have to deal with the after-effects of a past history, just as we enjoy and seek to exhaust our entire civilization life as an after-effect of the victory of the Greeks at Marathon and Salamis over Asiatic tyranny; of the victory of the Romans over the Carthaginians, and by it over African civilization, or of our [German] victories over the French. But if we have to deal only with after-effects it would be still possible that this Christ-picture does not represent wholly the reality of Christ, and our task would not be in any case to try to understand the reality of Christ. This task would be of great historical interest, but for our moral-religious life we would have the task of ascertaining and assenting to those eternal truths which constitute, or should constitute, the possession of the truly educated. Historical inquiry might perhaps be able to make some things clear, but we are not dependent on our relation

to the historical inquiry and to the evangelical history belonging to the past. The ever-recurring question, "How much in the evangelical accounts is truth and what is fiction?" need not trouble us.

But if that Christ-picture obtained through the work of criticism does not satisfy, is there quite another conception, namely, the New Testament Christ-picture, that will better satisfy our wants, because it displays to us historical phenomena and events whose after-effects promise more and do more for us than the former conception? For Christ is, as they say, a person of history; and persons of history, as well as events, only continue to work by their after-effects and in them. This is, indeed, true for persons, and for historical events which are nothing else. Luther continues to operate actively and powerfully through the word of faith, which he rediscovered, experienced, and preached with original force. But there is only an after-effect of his appearance when we believe as he believed, when by his word we are awakened and edified, strengthened and comforted, even in our last distress, and with him can say:

And tho it tarry the night,
And round again to morn,
My heart shall ne'er mistrust Thy might,
Nor count itself forlorn.

But Christ is more than a person of history, and just on this very account He alone satisfies our needs. Let us look at the matter more closely!

The path which the disciples walked with Jesus, the history which they experienced with Him and in

Him, were full of mysteries. But when from the end they looked back, everything dark became clear. From the end—but what point was that? From His death? There, nothing was clear to them, but everything was dark—not only dark, like an unsolved mystery, but dark as the hell in Dante, whose gate bears the inscription: “Abandon all hope.” What Jesus did to them at the end, in the washing of feet and the distribution of the supper, with the words, “This is my body, my blood, for the remission of sins,” they had indeed received reverently, but they understood it not. The enemies, Pharisees, scribes, priests—yes, the whole people, incited by them—had delivered Him to the Gentiles as one who no more belonged to the people of God, and upon whom the highest spiritual tribunal of Israel had pronounced the sentence of death. But the disciples lost all faith when they saw, as it appeared to them, that Jesus had yielded to the superior force and was taken captive. What they ever had in Him and hoped of Him was now gone. He was merely a man. To be sure, they were not wrong with their belief and hope in Him. On the contrary, if any one, He alone was able to save the world from sin, distress, and death, and they were therefore obliged to follow Him. With their belief they were still right over against their own people, who had rejected Him. But one thing they had not considered, which to-day still constitutes the relation of the world to Him: the power of sin. “Men loved the darkness rather than the light,” death rather than life, destruction rather than salvation. Therefore, they brought Him to death. This conviction of *sin* they had not expected. Until

the bailiffs had laid hands on Him, they had hoped in His victory, in His triumph, altho He had foretold them otherwise. That "these things must need come to pass," "the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men and suffer much and be killed," they had not comprehended, and comprehended it not even now. On the contrary, when this end came they despaired and gave up their hope. No one said: "He is nevertheless the Savior, the Messiah!" Still less: "He is even now, tho the crucified One, yea, because He is crucified, the Messiah, the Savior." Nevertheless, He *was* the Savior. If any one could have saved Israel and the whole world it was He. But the world refused Him and wished not to be saved by Him, and we, we could not be saved, for not even we remained faithful to Him. Now all is lost! The power of sin in the world, also our sin, is too great, so that Jesus even could not help. Now we have to expect nothing else than God's judgment. He is safe with the Father, into whose hands He commended His spirit. We, however, are lost—lost forever!

This was the impression which the disciples had of the sin of the world and of their own sin—a completely authorized impression, a sense of their guilt in keeping with the full truth. And yet it was also unauthorized. They should have known that it also belonged to the Messiah-way, to the Messiah-calling, to the Messiah-task of Jesus to suffer death from those for whom and to whom He had come, and on this account they should not have despaired, but should have waited in faith for that which must come, even tho they knew not how it could and must come. Jesus

had foretold them everything, but they had comprehended nothing, wished not to comprehend it, and believed not.

This fact, the disbelief of the disciples, is of essential and primary importance in the question as to the veracity or credibility—not of the truth, but of the account. Without exception it is confirmed to us by all the evangelists, and it shows the complete impossibility of such a sudden general change of feeling in the circle of the disciples, from perplexity, fright, despair, into a joy and blessed faith which never again left them unless a special event had taken place which took away the impression of Jesus' death. It is impossible that this change should have been brought about, in the few days which they had at their command, by some spontaneous resolution of the disciples to plunge, with ever greater longing and more grateful love, into the picture of that Man of whom they had expected not only still more but everything, nevertheless of whom they believed that they could now expect nothing more, and from whom, as they had to think, their guilt separated them forever. It might be a different matter if Jesus' death had not taken place prematurely, and if it had not been brought about by hostile force; if the disciples had been looking forward to the gradual development and formation in time of the Messianic work of Jesus, and had now been convinced that He still lived, tho in another world, in a higher existence, indeed, and therefore also lived more efficaciously than before. Even then it was inconceivable how this conviction could so quickly and generally give rise to the inner experience of "appear-

ances," not as of One dead from the other world, but of One risen from the dead. That the appearances were of a risen One is warranted to us by the testimony of the apostle Paul, which points back to the earliest time—perhaps into the year of Jesus' death—which again confirms the testimonies of the evangelists. But even supposing that the "appearance" of the heavenly, spiritual, glorified Jesus, quite subjectively originated and effected, had immediately been substituted in place of the appearance of the earthly, bodily, now supposedly forever risen Jesus, released from His hitherto existing limitations—the suddenness of this change in the disposition of the disciples remains nevertheless inconceivable. For again and again we are told of the unbelief of the male and female disciples of Jesus, whom Jesus had to reprove and admonish with the greatest seriousness. Eight days after the resurrection we find Thomas not at all inclined to be influenced by his codisciples, but opposing their account with all resistance. To him who contradicts his codisciples Jesus appears. Thomas must convince himself, and at the same time he must hear the words: "Be not faithless but believing."

That Thomas would not believe it, after all the other disciples had already seen the Lord, was not because he altogether regarded a resurrection as impossible before the last day. Only a few days before he had himself witnessed the resuscitation of Lazarus. But that Jesus, whom one of His disciples betrayed, whom the people rejected, whom Peter denied, whom all disciples deserted, should have risen again; that they, the disciples, who so ignominiously had deserted

Him, should have Him back again ; that all their sin, even their disbelief and the offense which they had taken at Him, should no more be remembered ; that all should rather be forgiven ; that everything should be well again, and all hopes should now be really fulfilled—this he could not believe. This he now experiences through the great mercies of Christ, and with the other disciples he can go now and proclaim to the world, in the name of this Jesus, the forgiveness of sin and the everlasting redemption. “To Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins.”

We ask not for the credibility of the accounts. The accounts can be credible—so far their authors are thoroughly credible persons and credible reporters—and yet what they have experienced they may have wrongly understood. There were no eye-witnesses of the resurrection ; in this all our accounts agree. Only the empty sepulchre is authenticated : by the experience of the women who came on the Easter morning to anoint the body of Jesus ; by the experience of the disciples who on their part afterward went there to view the grave and also did not find Him ; and by the testimony to which the bribery of the keepers and the purchase of their silence bears witness in behalf of it. But does the fact of the resurrection now follow from this ?

But we are not inquiring after the credibility of this fact itself ; for would the knowledge of its credibility convince us, anyhow, that we would be forced to believe it ? Belief would, all the same, still depend on the connection in rational sequence between the resurrec-

tion and the entire history of Jesus, so that our relation to the history of Jesus would be at the same time our relation to the fact of His resurrection. But we have no more to deal with the question as to the *credibility*, but only of the *actuality*. The credibility of the fact would at the most demonstrate the rationality of its acknowledgment. But of what avail is to us the acknowledgment of the fact, if it stands in no connection with the acknowledgment of Jesus Himself, and with His history in its eternal importance for us and our salvation?

Now it is of the greatest significance that the risen One Himself insists that His disciples ought to have been certain of His resurrection. In consequence of their communication with Him, and of all that they have hitherto heard and learned of Him, and of all they had hoped through their belief in Him, they should not have deserted Him, they should not have despaired, but should have waited patiently and undismayed and unconfounded during the Sabbath for His resurrection. This they did not do, and for this He reproaches them. There was no one any more in the world who still believed in Him. True, that they still remembered Him, and recollected the hours when His glory shone into their hearts and transported them with hope. They still loved Him, if one may call such remembering, especially such painful remembering, love, but—*they loved Him without faith*, they loved Him as one dead, from whom their sin separated them. "We hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel." Yes, we hoped! This is over now, through the guilt of the world and through our guilt. We believe no

more and we hope no more ; our sin and the world's sin is so great that even Jesus could not save us. Nothing is left but God's judgment !

Everything would indeed have been and remained as a memory of the past, provided the disciples had been right, provided Jesus had not actually returned from death, had not risen. They were indeed right with their idea of a judgment on their sin and the world's. They knew themselves to be under the weight of their guilt, of their sinful personal life that was so completely estranged from the love of God and Jesus, and under this weight they could not bend deep enough. But now Jesus has returned from death, and not this alone. It might have been indeed so as they feared when they received through the angels the first news of Jesus' resurrection : He might have come back to execute judgment over the world. But not for judgment had Jesus been sent by the Father into the world, not for judgment had He now been raised by the Father. Here is the unity, the harmonious relations of the resurrection of Jesus with His life and work. This was the great thing which the disciples experienced : Jesus' return to His own who had forsaken Him, His return into the world which had rejected Him. This they had not imagined, and yet they could and should have imagined it had they considered all their sin, and the great pardoning love and patience and miracles of Jesus and the words which He had spoken with them of His suffering and death. It was not necessary to commit the sin with which they crowned all sin. It was done, and Jesus had borne it also. Now the disciples experienced how great a

sin the love and the love-power of the Father and of Jesus covered ; now they understood that they could have believed when they had abandoned belief, and that they now, all the same, can believe in Him and be forever right in their belief. They understood that they were sent out into all the world to preach and to bring to it the forgiveness of sins and thus the everlasting redemption. The whole greatness of the miracle that had taken place arose to them with their insight into their redemption, which fell to their lot when, as they believed, they had incurred everlasting perdition. We understand that they could not abandon their faith while they lived, and, as Paul writes in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, they preached the Gospel as the Gospel of the Son of God, "who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead."

But this is not all. There is yet a mystery which requires explanation, and whose solution only discloses to us the whole importance of the resurrection. The disciples had sinned by their unbelief as Israel had *not* sinned. "Had the rulers of this world known the hidden wisdom of God they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," says Paul ; and Peter, who in the strongest manner called the Jews traitors and murderers of the Holy One of God, adds : "And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it." Israel's sin was not so great and heavy as that of the disciples, whom Jesus had so long, so earnestly, so lovingly, so powerfully united to Himself. On this account the disciples, to whom the risen One had brought forgiveness, could preach this forgiveness

also to Israel—yes, to the whole world. They did this, and set forth the forgiveness, not as merely possible but as an actual forgiveness, procured through Christ's suffering and death, and accomplished by His resurrection, now offered by the word of preaching or by the Gospel. It is true, many refused and declined. They have not kept back the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him to be made manifest "not to all the people but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." As we already said, they never proclaimed that those who might become and intended to become believers should also see Him, as they, the apostles, had seen Him. Still less did they think it necessary thus to see Him, in order to see Him in a spiritual reality and become a believer. Of those who became believers, none desired to see the risen One and to have an experience like Saul on the way to Damascus. To those who believed, it was certain that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that He did not merely pass over into eternal life, like those who die happily, but that He had returned forever into our life, into our communion, and now belongs to us through His resurrection and for all eternity. With them it was a matter of fact. They did not understand that we should believe Him as we believe concerning parents, teachers, the prophets, the apostles, who had passed away long ago, and whose words only we now have; but that we can believe in Him, can build our hope and trust on Him, can speak with Him, can pray to Him as to a living One. They proclaimed Him as the risen One, who did not go to

His place through death, but who had come back a victor over death and Hades, whom death could not hold, and who is now the living One, the Prince of Life, exalted to the right hand of God. From thence, after the Gospel has been preached in the whole world, He shall come again to judge and to establish His Kingdom. To believe in One who died and who existed in a higher world was not possible then, nor is it now. Of the return of such a One from heaven no one could by any means think. The belief in Jesus was belief in Him who has been dead, who had died and had become alive again; to whom, being dead, now belonged the past, according to His word: "I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

This was by no means a mere recollection of one dead. It was not a reestablishment of belief in one dead, whom they had given up in the first bewilderment over His death. It was *faith* in a living One who died and whom death had, nevertheless, been forced to give back. One may believe those who died, but one can not believe *in* them. One can not believe *in* Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, nor in David, Paul, or Luther, because they can not help us; they can only show, or tell us, how they believed, in whom and what they believed. But one can believe *in* Jesus. One, indeed, might think he could object to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus on the ground that Jesus had not appeared again in a mortal body and did not continue to live in a mortal body. One might urge that on this account the question can not be of a real, bodily resurrection, but that resurrection is only a figurative

expression for the blessed change which took place with Jesus, a change for which another expression, tho, after all, also figurative, is even better—the word “exaltation.” But Paul as little thought of our future resurrection as an “exaltation” as he thought thus of the resurrection of Jesus. He regarded the body that Jesus received as being just as little mortal as the future body we shall receive again in the resurrection. “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” The resuscitations of the dead which Jesus accomplished were only signs and testimonies of a better resurrection, of a future complete abolishing of death through Him, and this complete abolishing of death He first experienced in Himself. He went forth from the grave as the victor whom death could not hold, still less could subdue a second time—yet He was the same who was put into the grave, for He showed to Thomas His wounds and the print of the nails to convince him that it was Himself. He came to His own to convince them of the truth, greatness, and completeness of His love, which covers the whole great multitude of the sins of all. He again belonged to them. But He did not belong to a world in which the same fight and struggle arises ever and ever again, and where ever anew is kindled the fires of it. He has fought out this fight, which among us shall endure till the Gospel is preached to the last soul. Then only will the time come for Him to appear again, to come in His entire glory. Now He still has patience, and, therefore, waits for those who shall learn to believe. Have we learned? This is now the question. Have

we learned to believe as the disciples ought to have believed, even before Jesus rose? No; for our belief is only effected through the power of God, who raised Jesus from the dead; yes, for as the disciples learned that they could have believed, so we learn that we can believe. We may come to the conviction that Jesus is risen, and risen for our salvation, and for His justification by the Father, through the account in which this fact is communicated, and even more through the consistency of the entire testimony about Jesus. Everything which is said to us about Him, of His baptism and temptation, of His preaching and teaching and miracles, of His transfiguration and of His suffering and death, all stands together with His resurrection as one unitary whole, so that we can not do otherwise than believe in this Jesus as One who is living, and who lives for us. Therefore, we believe in Him as the risen One. Either He is the risen One, or we get an entirely different picture of Him—that picture whose entire insufficiency we have already represented to ourselves.

But, granting that the faith offered to us, and worked in us by the Gospel, is a faith in the risen One, a question remains which, as we said before, is not yet settled. It is this: Why did not the apostles, why has not any one in Christendom, demanded as necessary to a belief in Jesus that one must see the risen One as these witnesses did? We have already said that Jesus is more, much more, than a personage of history. He is, as it is called, a superhistorical phenomenon. He entered into history, into our history, but He has not left us again, and referred us to His after-

effects. He still *lives*, not merely has *lived*; He died, He revived again, and ascended into heaven; but He *lives*, and wherever His Gospel is preached He is actually known and experienced as *living*—a fact which, as may be supposed, is only admitted by those who believe, and is naturally opposed and denied by those who do not. He is preached unto us: all that He did, spoke, suffered; all that happened to Him. All this concerns us; it is for us the Gospel. Hearing it, we have, after all, to deal with Himself. We do not have merely a lively realization of His person and His words which is dependent on the art of presentation, or the warmth or the faithfulness by which the narrator succeeds in allowing the Lord to speak for Himself. The art may be insignificant, but the Lord speaks and treats with us Himself. The art may be great and may attract us, while Jesus still remains far from us. It is not that we transfer ourselves into the time of His earthly life, but rather that we are transferred, not only into that distant time, but into actual proximity to Him—into His very presence. That is a wonderful effect which proceeds from the preaching *about* Jesus (not merely from the words *of* Jesus), an effect which no other word has, not even that which is said to us of everlasting, unchangeable truths and laws. Let the words of our poets and thinkers touch us again and again; let them open to us depths of thought and feeling which otherwise we would not guess—yes, let them cause us to perceive, in many cases, the very great abyss of our sinful corruption—still is this by no means like the words about Jesus that come even from simple lips.

The former have no vital power, no power of eternal life. At the most they give us only *something*, but not *everything*. They are perishable words. The Word about Jesus (not merely the Word of Jesus) is a Word of *life*; it makes us not only feel the breath of eternity in the midst of time, it transfers us into the life of eternity. How can that be? Is it because it treats of eternal life, and thereby brings us into touch with the same? Is it because it treats of wonderful love, and thereby works in us a premonition of how blessed it must be thus to be loved? Even then, like a word about strange countries and men, it would still be only a word about that which, while true, is not essential; it is not the living Word. We well know this difference. Many a one preaches the truth, and honestly endeavors to preach Jesus; what he says is correct. But it is not all. Somehow the main thing is wanting. He preaches not Jesus. But at length he *finds* Jesus, *lays hold* of Him, preaches Him, and then at once an effect of His Word is felt. It is not the effect which he desires, not everywhere the same blessed effect, not everywhere the effect of a quick, sure, and complete decision on the part of the hearer. Again, another preaches Christ without himself having Christ, and the Word works. It is not the word of the preacher, who understands not, who comprehends not the effect at all. We ask: What is the explanation of this?

After He was risen and the disciples had Him again, everything which they had preserved of Him in their recollection became different. Till then, indeed, it had been to them, in these last days of his earthly life, a treasure which they could enjoy, but—without

really having anything. That period which they had spent with Him had been the most beautiful time of their life, in spite of the earnest words which they had been obliged to hear so often. They had seen great things, heard great things, and learned to hope and to expect still greater things. Then the hour came in which everything collapsed; when they lowered Jesus into the grave they sunk with Him in the grave all their hopes. They remembered the Sermon on the Mount, they recalled His words: "I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." All this was now of no use, everything was gone. But after He was risen all these words became alive again, for He Himself was living who had spoken them and about whom they were spoken. He was alive, never to die again; alive for them, the disciples, to whom He had returned, not to destroy them, but to forgive and save them. He was alive for the whole world, to which He belongs forever, and He sent His disciples out to preach to it the Gospel. Now they knew only what they had learned from Jesus Himself. His words had again authority. He stood by them. He had said and He said it again, and it was and is of good effect: "*I am*"—not "*I was*"—"The Bread of Life," "The Light of the World," "The Good Shepherd." He had said, and it had authority again, and is authority unto eternity: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He said—and it was and is eter-

nal truth and reality—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," "I *am* the vine, ye *are* the branches," "Apart from Me ye can do nothing, with Me everything," "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do." Now only the disciples experienced the whole full power of these words, because He who had spoken them *was risen*. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever," who keeps His word now and in eternity, fulfils His promises, offers Himself to those who hear such words, gives Himself to those who believe such promises, treats with those also to whom the disciples bring His name.

This is the power not only of the words of Jesus, but of the words about Jesus. The risen One, over whom death has now no more power, and for whom exists no more any bounds of space and time, stands since then by His *Word*, and the *Word about Him*, and on this account it is a *living* Word in the proper and fullest sense of the term. With His presence He covers the Word by which His own testify of Him. It is indeed a wondrous, a paradoxical Word through and through, an incredible Word, the Word of our, the sinners', redemption, of our pardon, of our eternal life. It is the contrary of all self-demonstrative truth. How is it possible to believe it? It is a Word that expresses no truth which the more serious and deeper mind of man would perceive as proved in the natural constitution of things, but rather the truth which stands in opposition to the natural constitution of things, the contrary of all that which logical and morally consistent thinking can tell us. How shall it be possible to know and acknowledge it as truth, to believe it?

The fatal mistake which has been committed, and which Harnack committed in the extremest form, is the supposition that by such criticism as his the tenor of the Gospel is purged of its paradoxical character, which obliges its followers to put themselves in opposition to all logical and moral consistency while they yet retain the paradox, not always perceived to be such, that is found in the relation of freedom to the constraint of the law of nature. We have not, however, to deal with this paradox of the Divine freedom, which in all respects follows the same line of possibility as that by which our freedom proves itself over against the constitution of nature. The paradox we have to consider is that of free grace over against our sin and sinfulness. From Harnack's standpoint one must estimate sin as an unavoidable product of our finitude. Guilt is heavy only accordingly as the offense is heavy, and guilt and the excuse for it are again and again placed together. For the same reason, from Harnack's standpoint, one must regard the doings of God only as a consistent consequence of the rightly perceived essence of God, as the loving Father, the provider and leader of His creatures. Jesus, in their view, is to be regarded as one who made us free from the error of those conceptions of God hitherto existing, and mediated a knowledge of the kindness and love of God which we now know and believe, and upon which we now live. As Harnack expresses it: "Only the Father, not Jesus, belongs in the Gospel."

It is true, indeed, that Jesus does not belong in that to which Harnack has reduced the Gospel. Yet that

word is not quite correct. Let us rather say, Jesus does not belong in the Gospel that Harnack has *constructed*, and in which he has only borrowed words from the Gospel about Christ and from the Gospel of Christ, which have now, however, received quite another meaning. The Gospel of the New Testament is for Harnack a paradox which surpasses all his notions of paradox, and on this very account he disputes it. He is not concerned with the question of redemption that delivers us from death and damnation—words that express in the only consistent sense the fact of our being lost from sin and guilt, which from our birth have become part of us or of which we are a part—but he knows only a redemption which abolishes the power of error, and *thereby* the power of sin, for error is not sin, but sin is rather error. Harnack needs in his view only knowledge, which determines the will, and suggestion, which draws us along into the right paths. Thus he needs merely a Jesus who not only in life but also in death is and remains what we are, except that He was not in degree what we are, but is set before us that we may not remain as we are, but submit ourselves to be raised from error to truth by His knowledge and His religion and piety. For, according to the proposition of Harnack and others, nothing that ever appeared in history goes beyond the measure of the human.

But how may the paradox of the New Testament Gospel, the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel *about* Christ not be *overcome*, for this is impossible, but be acknowledged as truth, as saving truth, and as eternal truth? Only by this: that Jesus Himself by His

presence protects His Word. As the living One, and therefore as one who is present, He tells us the Word of severity and also the Word of His wondrous, incomprehensible love. When the question is of His love, of the works and the miracles and the power of love, and of the mercy and patience which He has shown to sinners, to the paralytic, the great sinner, the publican, and even to a Peter, we know by an inward experience not that this *was* He, but that this *is* He! When we hear of the paradox of His incomprehensible love which will even save the prodigal son, we should be afraid of the sin of saying: "Jesus received sinners"; we must say: "Jesus *receives* sinners." Everything which is recorded of Him, of His work and sayings, of His patience and suffering, of His death and resurrection, of His entire history, is not history merely, it is an immanent, real, living presence, and not merely a realization of His past. He *is* to-day what He was then, the same whom men not only resisted then, but still resist, and to-day He still endures the resistance, our resistance, and rewards it with pardoning grace. The like of this we do not find elsewhere in the whole world, in the entire connection of things. Of course we do not, for there is only one Jesus, who once appeared in the ongoing of history to take away the sins of many, and that which He did for us and does on us He and only He does; and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that this, His work, and with it His existence, go beyond the measure of the human; for, no one can redeem besides Him; such redemption is far beyond all the abilities of man. That the fabrication of His history, as some phrase it,

and His marvelous Gospel did not originate from such reflection over that which is possible or impossible, but that this reflection is rather only an effect of His wondrous redemption, is a statement needing no proof.

Jesus is present where His Word is preached, His name is acknowledged, His love is praised. This we feel, and with it we feel that *He is more than a personage of history*. He is, indeed, a personage of history, of our history. But He is more than this; He is *super-historical*. He *entered into* history, and was destined to be separated again from the ordinary course of humanity and its history. For this He was killed, suffered the death which was inflicted on Him. But He endured it as the One who was to attain thereby His *object*. He attained it by dying for us, for our benefit and not to our injury, and by rising again from the dead and by belonging to us forever—the helper whom the two greatest world-powers, sin and death, can not separate from us. He not only became alive then, but has lived ever since, and everything that He was, as He lived before, lives again with Him. This explains not only the peculiar impression which we have from the uniqueness of the Word about Him, but the unique effect which the Word about Him still exercises. It brings the Gentiles to that point to which it brought the first Christians—namely, of becoming people “who call upon the name of Jesus,” who do and speak the highest deeds and words which a man can possibly do and speak, and wherein the whole being, soul, and heart express themselves. Or was this praying, this calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus, only superstition, the aberration, excusable or inexcusable, of

those who believed in Jesus and thought that faith in Jesus and prayer to Jesus belonged together? Whoever dislikes the designation of Jesus as of the "superhistorical" can give it up as soon as he has found a better one; but Jesus differs from all persons of history in that He is not a man who merely once existed, but is living, who to-day still lives and acts; this fact remains, and in this consists the mystery of the efficiency of the Gospel. To be sure, just this is denied by those who make Jesus only a man of history who, as they admit, certainly has done more and is of more importance to-day to humanity than any of those to whom humanity owes its best. But that His superhistorical nature is denied is, in accordance with what we have said before, not only comprehensible, but to be expected. Nor is it strange that the contest is made not only with vehemence and haughty presumption, as by Häckel, but with an array of scientific skill, and with the whole weight of the appeal to the laws of the firmly established constitution of nature and history in which we live. It is conceded that this world-order does not rule out, as by brute force, everything which goes beyond physical necessity, but it is not conceded that a man like ourselves can influence this fixed order by his freedom, nor that God can work differently than by a wise governing of this constitution of things to prove His providence. Over against this we can again and again only refer to the great problem: "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" which is not solved by the supposed paradox of our freedom, but only by the great paradox of Divine freedom, the free-

dom of His grace and mercy, which made Jesus die for our sin, and raised Him for our justification. Whoever will be done with sin and guilt by the way of intellect, let him try it. If he tries it honestly and seriously, he must and will arrive at this paradox, which at last can only be *believed*.

This is the connection between history and *faith*. We also believe in everlasting truths, in the existence of God, in a moral order of the world, in the inviolability of the moral law, and can retain these truths in no other way than by a voluntary acceptance—*i.e.*, in faith. In all our life we are restricted to faith ; as some one has said : “ By faith only has man a father and mother ; by faith only has he a friend.” For just this best thing in life, the love of others, demands our faith. Whoever will not believe can misinterpret everything. But this kind of belief and our Christian belief differ, nevertheless, very essentially. With this ordinary belief I believe only what is rational—what I perceive as truth with my reason, tho it is not always necessary that the object of faith should really exist. I or any other can withdraw from the acknowledgment at his own risk. He need neither believe in the existence of God nor in the validity of any moral law; he can refuse for himself the demand upon love, whose existence he does not acknowledge in others. Only in such a belief, voluntarily adopted, am I sure of the eternal law which concerns us all, of everlasting judgment, of my inviolable duty, and of my being lost forever. For this alone is rational, nothing contradicts it, and it finds nothing itself which it contradicts than the want of willingness on our part to entertain it.

But what Christianity demands of us and offers us is, that we connect with this faith, at the same time, the faith in its contrary : with the belief in our sin, our guilt, and our judicial imprisonment, the belief in our pardon and our redemption ; with the belief in God's eternal order of justice, the belief in His equally eternal love. This is not the demand that we now seek an adjustment between these apparently contrary facts, nor that we must know how both are authorized and can exist side by side with each other, nor that we should understand that that only is the right and deepest thinking and the only correct knowledge which has apprehended the necessary unity of both. Here no necessary unity obtains at all. No premise, no antecedent requires it. God is free, absolutely free. He condemns, and therein acts justly. He pardons and justifies the impious, and no one can say that He acts unjustly.

The difference between that faith which Christianity presupposes (tho it often becomes vital only where Christianity has already acquired a footing) and the faith which Christianity offers to us is this : In Christianity we have to deal with an historical attitude of God. We not only believe that we are sinners and that we are lost, as Christianity presupposes, but we are also to believe that God loved and loves us, and did and does everything that we might not perish. We are to believe in a God who historically acted for us and acts with us, after we have historically departed from His ways, from the everlasting right and law, and have put ourselves in opposition to Him. Our historical conduct is the presupposed occasion for the his-

torical conduct of God, which stands before our eyes in Christ, which became reality in Christ and since then is and has superhistorical reality. True, God's thoughts are everlasting thoughts; they are from eternity for eternity. But His thoughts toward our redemption have their presupposed occasion—our conduct, our sin—and God's conduct in the sending of His Son is not to serve for the furtherance and the securing of our development, but is to redeem us from our false development, our sin and guilt, and counteract its consequences. Besides, we can believe in the historical conduct of God only when it has entered into history, and then has become for us as present conduct. The significant fact is that we are released from the ban under which eternal law and right and truth have placed us on account of our historical conduct. We can not lift this weight merely by the knowledge that the eternal love of God is still higher and that this is equally eternal truth. By that supposition the whole seriousness and the entire truth and power of our knowledge of sin would be abolished. It is a fact that in the same degree in which my sin loses its meaning for me, in the same measure or in a still higher measure also vanishes my interest in the grace of God, and so in the conduct of God, and with it my interest in faith. Only the interest of opposition to the Gospel, then, keeps the discussion alive, and preserves an appearance of interest in the matter. Only that Gospel exercises real power which makes known to us a conduct of God, which in absolute freedom had mercy upon us, which entered into our history, interfered with it, and has now become a lasting presence. Upon this view

nothing is denied which should be affirmed. The inviolableness of the eternal truth and the law of God, the whole greatness of our sin and guilt, the fact of our being lost—everything is acknowledged unreservedly ; so acknowledged that our sin appears ever clearer, ever greater, ever heavier : “ That thou never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I have forgiven thee all ” (Ezekiel xvi : 63). At the same time, our faith becomes ever more grateful and fervent, more inward, quiet, and deep.

This is, in reality, the harmony between faith and history. We can not be quite deprived of history, because we need historical and, at the same time, lasting reality. The redemption being at hand and offered to us, we see and know its nature, and can understand that this is the only way by which we could or can be helped. And this Divine grace, which is at the same time history and eternity, stands before us in the resurrection of Jesus. By that everything that concerns Him—His humility for our sake—became a present, enduring reality. He could not by force lay claim to acknowledgment without destroying us and the whole world. His patience, with which He endured the hardness of the human heart, and again and again showed to them nothing but love, tho he had to chide them and did chide them ; His innocent and patient suffering and death, tho He had the power to defend Himself by one word against the whole world and to destroy it—all this is now enduring, present reality in Him who offers Himself to us as the One who was crucified and rose again. Every word still has authority, and is to-day His word to our hearts. This is not because

He was dead and remained in death, it is not because He was dead and was transferred to a higher existence, like those who are saved but can no more speak to us, and whose words are now only of importance for us so far as they point us to another One who is able to help us. His words have authority *because He was dead and became alive*, and now has the keys of hell and death. Because He gave Himself to us He still gives Himself to us, and gives Himself to every one to whom His word comes. In having Him I have my redemption, because I have the Redeemer. Since I have and hold Him, my life is a life through Him, a life in Him, a work in cooperation with Him. Living or dying we are His, the living Savior's own. We know, then, and can say: "He died for me and lives for me." "The old man," as Paul says, "is crucified with Him," and my life has become new. "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." "In Christ we *have*, I *have*, the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." John, however, writes: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and *our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*" And so we must say that our Lord Christ is not a man who once existed, but who is present; not one who died happily, but the author of our salvation, and all this because He rose from the dead.

Thus, all depends on the fact of His resurrection. If He is not risen not even Harnack is right, but then


everything is lost, and all efforts and all hopes are dreams—nothing but dreams. That He is risen is not made certain to us by any account, tho it were ever so carefully received and preserved. But as the disciples had no need to experience the resurrection first, or, rather, to see the risen One, so we, too, ought to be certain of the resurrection by that which we experience of Him, by His life, which we perceive. We are not to believe in Jesus on account of His resurrection, but we believe His resurrection because we believe in Jesus ; and we believe in Jesus because we experience Him in His word and in the Word about Him. We experience that He speaks to our troubled soul : “ Be of good cheer, I have bought thee with a price ! ” We experience that He is the only One—He in whom we can trust for time and eternity. Let one call this mysticism, nevertheless the experience exists. We experience His word : “ Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed ; and we learn to lay hold of Him whom we see not as if we saw Him.” Looking backward from His resurrection, as did the disciples, we obtain the understanding of all mysteries of His person and history. It is with this understanding that His person and history ought to be exhibited in place of the many so-called historical “ Lives of Jesus ” which have appeared since 1835.

To be sure, the one thing that it is necessary for us to know and understand is that Jesus will save sinners. Our faith is *morally conditioned*. He who denies the knowledge and acknowledgment of His sin as Jesus demands and effects it—and one can deny it—will never come to a belief in the risen One. First

of all, there can be and there are other reasons which render this belief difficult. For it must, indeed, be acknowledged by us that this faith stands in keen opposition to all which is otherwise possible in the orderly ongoing of history, that the proposition of the resurrection of Jesus is the most incredible thing imaginable, or at all events a proposition than which there can be only one that is a more incredible fact—the fact of our redemption. But all these reasons against it finally recede before one final consideration—namely, our sin and its consequences, our guilt, death, and perdition. It must be determined by us whether we will know and acknowledge the living and consequently the risen Christ or not. In the first place, it is our intellect which renders the believing more difficult to us; finally, however, the decision is determined by our will. It is not as if our will conditioned and effected our faith; our volition effects the disbelief, whereas Jesus by His presence effects the faith. One can *be* unbelieving, and blameless, tho unhappy, like Thomas, but one can *remain* unbelieving only with a bad conscience.

VIII

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

UT now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep, as we also shall some day rise. But He is not merely the first by the resurrection of the dead, as Paul expresses himself at another time, but He is "The Author of our Redemption," "The Prince of Life," "The Author of our Salvation." For it was the Savior chosen and given by God who had been crucified, the Messiah. That He really was and is the Messiah became manifest to the disciples, and He became a power for them through His resurrection, and that power is now to be manifested to the whole world through the risen One, who confirms the words of His disciples by His presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection is the Divine justification of Jesus, the installation hitherto opposed into the rank of His Messiahship, into His position of authority. As Peter says: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts ii: 36). The Lord is Christ, because He has to speak and command as Messianic King, into whose hand the Father hath given all things, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. He is the Lord, not because by His influence He unites us to Himself, and thus is the first-fruits and the center of

all believers, not because He held His place and remained Lord of the world, when it sought to overcome Him in His inward life by the suffering which it caused to Him. He is not the Lord, as we **shall** become and remain lords over the world to triumph over it, instead of allowing it to triumph over us **with** its power. Tho David's son, He is yet David's Lord—Lord over the King of Israel ; His throne stands above the throne of that King. He is Lord as having a unique Messianic and, therefore, Divine superiority. He determines all things, and, therefore, our eternal destiny, as He assured Himself to be able to do in the closing passages of the Sermon on the Mount. In short, He is the Lord, to whom we pray, as is indicated in the oldest name of the Christians, " who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

But if He is this and is experienced by us as One present with us who still *is* what He *was*, then He is not merely our brother. He is something that none of our brothers is or can be, and something which no man can be—at the same time our God and Lord. We have the most pressing interest in the fact that He is what we are, wholly man, man like us, born to die, but the interest which is far greater than any interest which we can take in a *man* depends on this : that *this* man, this Jesus, is also our God and Lord. God and Lord He is, and yet our brother, wholly our brother, wholly ours. This is the great God and Lord, and yet our flesh and blood, and through flesh and blood member of our race. Could we say this of Him if He only were man, as we are? Were it not blasphemy to call a man God, as the heathenish Romans called their

emperors, yes, even their teachers, their philosophers, "*Deus ac Dominus noster*"? This no Jew and no Christian—at the least, a disciple of Jesus, like Paul and John—could ever bring to their lips. Jesus, however, stands before us wholly as our equal, and yet more than our equal, who, however, will be no more than we, but will forever belong to us, to share with us everything that He is and has. All His goods, His whole being, is to be ours.

That such is the case follows from the already considered fact that He enters into our life not as the departed but as the *living*—speaks with us, deals with us, produces faith in us. It is He who offers Himself to us that we should have in Him redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. He gives Himself to us, God gives Him to us, that He, and through and with Him, God's full grace and God's whole kingdom may belong to us. This we may indeed deny, but only as we can deny all moral powers interfering with our life. As real as our sins, which are indeed no mere fancy; as real as our sense of guilt, which is just as little fancy; as real as death and judgment, these startling realities that are already felt by us beforehand, because they are already present reality—so real is the forgiveness of sins through Christ. In no other man do we have this; in Jesus, and, indeed, in Jesus who died and rose again, we have it because He is man and therefore our brother. The child in the manger at Bethlehem, the man on the cross on Calvary, both *are* ours, not merely *were* ours. They *are* ours because He rose, and in consequence of that there is forgiveness of sins in Him and the full grace

of God is ours. But this He is, therefore, and this we have, therefore, in Him, because it is our God and our Lord who became our brother, wholly our brother. Thus, none other belongs to us as He belongs to us, who has so condescended to us. From the manger He is everything that He is for us. He does not *become* the Savior, He *is* a Savior from the beginning, and what happens to Him and what He experiences and suffers is not that He may *become* the Savior, *but because He is the Savior*.

That we pray to One who was, is, and shall be God, and therefore never ceased and shall never cease to be God, and yet who humbled Himself to be like us, who became man in order to suffer because of us, His brethren, and at the same time to suffer for us, yes, to suffer unto death, became man because He was not to judge but to save—all this is called mythology by some. But no matter who may call it mythology, it is not mythology. It is rather the absolutely free action of the ever-living God, who will live with us and for us, will share with us His whole being, will exist for us in free, unconstrained love. Being free, He does not act merely as some laws of the orderly sequence of nature and history act, or as the difference between God and His creatures conditions the latter's actions. He acts in response to the need of us whom He has united not only to nature and history, but, in a region transcending these, to *Himself*. And thus He acts as He will, not only without ever ceasing to be God, but in a way to prove by His absolute freedom His Deity. This, His very freedom and power, He proves when He becomes man, and yet as man be-

comes our God and our Lord. We are esteemed of Him so highly, so near are we to Him, the nearest to His throne in the rank of His creation, that God can unite with us wholly and forever, even tho we have not remained in fellowship with Him and have not walked the path of communion with Him. He becomes man not to exhibit His power, as in the legend the gods become men—*i.e.*, assume only the form of men to display their power. Nor does He become man to exercise as a warrior god His acts of power, as the heroes of pagan legend. Still less does the man Jesus become a god or a demigod, like Hercules and Theseus. He becomes man to be wholly man, powerless, weak, and poor, to suffer and to die, and thus to belong to us in our sins, that He may deliver and redeem us.

The wondrous counter-effect of God against our sin is indeed a miracle, the absolutely inconceivable contrary of that which elsewhere or otherwise takes place or can take place. It is a miracle that He became man—became man forever, not merely assumed human form for a time. It is a miracle that He died and rose, which is not to be explained from certain presuppositions lying in the established order of nature and history, or following from the orderly unity of rational thinking. It is all grace, nothing but grace, the freedom of the Divine love, which could thus accomplish the greatest miracle of all—our redemption and salvation. To understand this one must only clearly admit that our being lost is a fact, and eternal Divine justice a necessity to which we have to yield, hard as it may be for us. Only grace can save us, but it must be in such

wise that truth is justified and sin is called and remains sin. And this takes place in Jesus and through Jesus. God becomes our brother, and bears and suffers our sins. Doing this, He effects our pardon. This it is which unites us to Him in indissoluble bonds, as we now only fully acknowledge our sin and condemn ourselves when we see our sin before us in the light of His suffering and death. Whoever has perceived, believed, experienced the inconceivable miracle, and the fact of our redemption and salvation, has experienced Jesus, and lives in the realization that He is ours and belongs to us as no one else can belong to us; to him the miracle of His resurrection, and consequently also the wonder of His incarnation, is not too great. "Unto us," yes, "unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!" We could not believe the fact of our redemption if we did not experience Him, the Redeemer, as He stands before us and says: "I am yours! I have redeemed thee!" And we should not experience Him had He not risen; and He could not have risen were He not the Messiah, chosen of God; and He were not the Messiah were He not our brother and yet our God and Lord; and He were not this had He not condescended to us, did we not have in Him and of Him everlasting grace.

This is the real order of nature and history. That Christ becomes in this order of grace an "irregular phenomenon in history" troubles us the less because we are ruined by the regularity of phenomena and by the law of development. Because Christ is our

brother, and on the ground that He is an "irregular" appearance in history, only on this account, and precisely on that account, we have in Him our redemption and can believe in Him. *Even our sin is an "irregular phenomenon in history,"* however regularly it now occurs. For it has interrupted the harmonious order of the work of God, and still interrupts it. It is the great perturbation on whose account the regular course of nature and history is our irresistible destruction. For this phenomenon, the world, with its harmonious constitution, is not intended, in order that all should perish. But sin destroys everything, and were it not for the forbearance of God the world would already be destroyed from the beginning, and everything would be lost past recovery. In the law of development, the law of our existence (not by that self-direction, according to which we should govern ourselves, but in the law which rules over us), we had nothing but the document and seal of our destruction. God, however, with the word of His power, and according to the decree of His love, has preserved the world, while He allowed sin to become powerful and ever more powerful that He might save it through Jesus. "He hath shut up all unto disobedience that He might have mercy upon all"—this is a word which must be understood that one may not make a mere phantom out of sin and guilt, but may understand that only through the incarnation of God a redeemer could come.

But now arises a whole series of questions—among them some of such a nature that we can not answer them, as, for instance, How is it possible that one can

be God and yet other than God, and still the unity of God remain? etc.—questions that can not be answered by reference to the union of the will of Jesus with that of the Father. But is the acknowledgment of a fact dependent on the answering of all the questions which are connected with it? Is the acknowledgment of the fact of our sin dependent on the answer which we are to give to the question how Satan, to whom our sin is referred, became sinful? Is the acknowledgment of the fact of creation dependent on the question how space and time detach themselves from the omnipresence and eternity of God? In all such questions we pass judgment upon the fact whose actuality we acknowledge from predominant reasons, tho we do not wholly comprehend it. We do not comprehend the fact of our continuation after death, and yet we are certain of it; we do not comprehend the existence of God, and yet we are certain of it; we do not comprehend God's judgment and its execution, and yet we are certain of it. The denial would have, moreover, quite different incomprehensibilities that would follow. In like manner it is with the question as to the unity of God, which can not be abrogated because of the difference of God from Christ, of the Father from the Son. We only answer: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf." The proposition adduced against the incarnation that the finite can not contain and include in itself the infinite—*finitum non est capax infiniti*—is unsound, for this is not the question here at all. The question is the contrary—namely, whether the infinite is capable of the finite, and can include in itself:

infinitum est capax finiti. But it is, nevertheless, correct to affirm that the finite may contain the infinite. There is only One who is infinite—God; and He once only entered into this union with the finite by the incarnation in Christ. It is entirely wrong to think of God's capacity as restricted by a logical law, because there also exists a superrational, tho not irrational, working of God. God's counsel is superrational for the redemption of those who, tho not lost according to the law of reason, still are lost. The wisdom of God, which has chosen not the wise, the noble, the strong, but the foolish things, the weak things, the things that are not, is superrational. Superrational, not irrational, is our redemption through the Cross. Superrational, not irrational, is our redemption through the incarnation of God.

If this be so, we are not to say that the divinity of Christ manifests itself only in His ability, in His moral purity, in His miracles, in His power to suffer and to die, and yet to rise again. His miracles He performed by reason of His extraordinary endowment from the Father, as Moses and Elias did before Him. He walked without sin, and overcame every temptation, as we should, but as we do not; He suffered and died, because He was like us, our brother, and by the resurrection that occurred to Him, through the power of the Father, He became the first-fruits of them that are asleep. But if all this is to have something of significance not only for Him but for us, if all this is to inure to our benefit, it is because He is the *Messiah* who does it and to whom it happens. And that He is and can be the Messiah follows from the fact that He

is our brother, who belongs to us, not as all others, to our injury and to theirs (for every one who is born, unless he becomes a believing Christian, aggravates sin and guilt, and becomes a curse to others, instead of a blessing), but for our benefit, because He is forever God and Lord.

He thus became no more than we are, because being God He became man. His incarnation is not and does not bring about a grading up of the human beyond the measure of the human. It is nothing but self-humiliation. He was born that He might die, as we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii : 14). We all bring death with us into the world, so that it is the consequence of our birth. With Him this consequence was at the same time a *purpose*. This is the difference between Him and us. He, the Prince of Life, was born that He might die. This is what Paul has in mind when he writes of Christ that He, "being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but *emptied Himself*, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." If it were not Jesus to whom we look, if it were not a question of making the impossible possible, if all this were not a concern of our salvation, if it were not that Jesus to whom we can pray, we should not believe it, but despair. Now, however, He, our brother, and yet our God and Lord, comes before our eyes in this form of the suffering One, justified of God through the resurrection, proved by the resurrection to be the Son of God chosen as Savior. Therefore, we can not do

otherwise than express in this apostolic word the miracle which we believe. It is no speculation of the apostle, set forth as his own, and not to be acknowledged by us. It is the fact of our redemption, purposed of God, proclaimed by Jesus, and therefore purchased with His death. He describes, indeed, a fact which is so wondrous that none would believe it unless the presence of Jesus proved it—the presence of Him who is both our brother and yet our God and Lord. To a similar effect he also says at another time (II. Corinthians viii : 9) : “ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, tho he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.”

John, of course, seems to speak differently of the incarnation. He calls Jesus the Word, in whom from eternity, already before the foundation of the world, all is appointed that God has to say unto us. Through Jesus' mediation, therefore, the world is created, which from the beginning to this day was and is referred to Him, the light of life, the source of all peace for every one of us. It is He of whom we need only to think in order to have before us everything which God has to say to us. But that which God has to say to us, that which in the deepest ground of His being He has left for us, this in His love He is Himself. He has left Himself for us, *Himself* He will give to us and does give to us by giving us His Son. Therefore, He in whom all this stands before us as present and forever is from eternity as God—the Word *is* God. And of this Word, which was before the world was, God in God or to God, it is said that it became what we are. The Word

became flesh, not merely dwelt in the flesh, but it *became* flesh—the greatest imaginable contrast, and one which we, who are flesh, subject to death, would hardly dare to express if it were not Jesus of whom this is predicated. But He who was God, and to whom we are referred from the beginning, through whom alone we have and can have the life everlasting, thus deeply humbled Himself even unto death, and went into the realm of the dead, yes, and beyond it, that He may fully belong to us. This is the wonderful fact that flesh, our flesh, the material appearance of our being, became to Him the means of belonging to us and of proving Himself ours by suffering and death. Therefore, it is said in the first epistle of John (I. John iv : 2, 3) : “Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ” (the Son of the Father, with whom we are to have communion with the Father) “is come in the flesh” (so that the flesh became the means of proving Himself as the Messiah, as Savior) “is of God, and every spirit which confesseth not that Jesus Christ came into the flesh is not of God.” This he says of that Jesus of whom he writes at the end of this epistle : “This is the true God and eternal life,” as Paul (Romans ix : 4, 5) says when he praises the prerogatives of Israel : “Of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God, blessed forever.”

But how does it appear that this is not, after all, the opposite conception from that of the apostle Paul? Paul speaks of the humiliation, John of the majesty and glory of the Word which became flesh. But after he has said, “The Word became flesh,” he continues : “And dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory

as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Is it not for him the principal thing that he saw, not the flesh, but the glory of God in Christ, in the Word which became flesh? "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son" (who is the true Son of the Father in distinction from us, the children adopted by grace), "He hath declared him." Upon this phrase I pause to remark that, according to the connection, as far as I see, the reading, "The only begotten Son," can alone be genuine, and not "The only begotten God," nor "God only begotten," in spite of the English authorities, and afterward the German, who adopted the latter phrase. The text that follows—"Which is in the bosom of the Father"—refers to the truth and actuality of the Sonship, made known as genuine by the "bosom position" that is assigned to Him. But this is only by the way. Does not John mean to say that out of the flesh of Jesus has unmistakably shone upon Him the Divine Being who is distinct therefrom? For what does he understand by the glory of Jesus, which Jesus manifested at Cana in Galilee, so that His disciples believed on Him? What does Jesus understand by the glory of God when He says to Martha: "If thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God"? Is, perchance, the wondrous power of Jesus an emanation of His otherwise hidden glory? But Jesus performs no miracles in the power of that which he is eternally, but in the power of a special Divine investiture for His Messianic call, which He received because He declined to prove His Divinity otherwise than by suffering. This glory to which John testifies was the glory of

His Messiahship, the humiliation of Him who was God, because He came not to judge the world but to save it. By this glory John knew Him who was God forever. This could only be He whom the Father's wondrous love has given to us that all who believe in Him should not perish but have life everlasting. To believe in Jesus and in this faith, to have the life in His name, this was and remained to John always a paradox. And that this paradox was and is demanded he perceived as a paradox of the bodily appearance of Jesus with His eternal essence. Yet it is this very paradox that revealed to John the Messianic calling of Jesus. Eternal God and yet like us, and because like us therefore belonging to us, and because belonging to us more completely than any other who might desire to pass beyond our bound and be like God—*eritis sicut Deus*—therefore the Messiah and our Savior! According to John, the humiliation even of the Word which became flesh is our salvation.

And this Jesus—thus it is demanded by some, and even a historian like Harnack pursues this demand—ought to have communicated to His disciples the secret of His “fatherless birth,” as it is called, and of His everlasting, supermundane going forth. But were the disciples able to understand and believe this before they had known the whole tenor of His Messianic calling? That He is the Son of God and that they perceived Him as Son of God, this, as we have said, was already expressed in their acknowledgment of His Messiahship. That it contained no blasphemy they were persuaded, because they perceived in Him the Messiah, as the Jews also unhesitatingly conceded this predicate

to the Messiah who actually should prove to be Messiah. This is also expressed in the adjuring question of the high priest: "Art Thou Christ, the Son of the living God?" But just in what manner He was the Son of God, what this Divine Sonship signified, this they could only perceive when the whole blessed reality of all that His Messiahship comprehended and meant for them was laid before them. Till then they still waited for the revelation of His Messiahship, altho and because they believed in it; but they knew not that all this which they could not yet harmonize with His Messiahship was, in fact, the proof of His Messiahship. It was proof that He had come not to judge the world, but to redeem it; not to destroy the lives of men, but to save them. What He told them on the last night—"I came out from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go unto the Father"; and what He prayed in this last night: "O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was"—were most important and mysterious utterances whose significance was soon to become intelligible to the disciples, but was not yet clear, because they could not yet understand His way.

No, He could not tell, He could not communicate to the disciples the mystery of His birth. He thought of His Father and of all that which He had given up, not as a sacrifice, but as One who would be nothing other than we are. On this account He speaks of it just as little as of His Messiahship. From His acts and His experience they should know Him, and did know Him finally so well that they learned to pray to

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Him and had to pray to Him. From now on they knew that He was God from eternity, and understood what, properly speaking, many could now communicate only to those who were convinced of His Divine Messiahship.

What the evangelists Matthew and Luke record does not have for its purpose to make clear to us the incarnation of Him who was God, but it is not therefore merely a product of legend and poetry which could only have originated in the Christian congregation. It rather traces the birth of the child of Mary, appointed as Messiah, and thus as King of the Kingdom of God, and as Savior of the world, to the working of the Spirit of God, by which all workings of God, especially all workings of grace, consummate themselves. God's Spirit brings it about that Mary, Joseph's betrothed, should bear the child in the line of David's house, and thus it becomes heir to David's throne. God's Spirit brings it about that this child shall be born in order to die, that thereby the reverse be prepared for us, even eternal life. God's Spirit brings it about that Simeon comes to the temple, sees the little child which is brought there by the parents, and breaks out into the words of his song of praise: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Lord, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." And the same Spirit of God brings it about that Simeon prophesied: "This is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken

against." We perceive that this child, so wondrously born in the power of the Spirit of God, is yet *born in order to die*; we perceive that in both evangelists this child's history is a history misunderstood of men, a history of suffering, such as no other man ever experienced it. But this child and this man had to experience it if He is to be one come, not to judge the world, which had indeed ripened them for judgment, but one who should save it. "Conceived of the Holy Ghost," but "born of the Virgin Mary," saluted and praised by God's angels, but "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, descended to the dead"—this was His lot. That His birth already, altho so wondrously brought about, belongs to the history of suffering is easily seen when we consider that, according to both evangelists, Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, only learned later what honor awaited her and what task was also intended for him. There was no man who had believed Mary when she narrated what happened to her—Joseph, indeed, the least. She had to keep silent and commit to God her way. Therefore, she humbled herself, and said to the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word"—the deepest humiliation which till then a human being could take upon herself, and which could bring to her the fate of being repudiated by Joseph and being despised by every one as an unmarried woman who was about to bring forth. And Joseph could just as little speak about it to any one, because there was none who would have believed him. Thus nothing was left them but to keep the secret and say nothing about it till Mary's mouth was opened

when Jesus had risen and ascended to heaven. And there was kept and transmitted by the congregation an account of this annunciation which could only depend on Mary's communications, and which was so chaste and careful that nothing was added beyond this little of the Divine miracle, till the wild fancy of later time *invented* a history of the birth and infancy which has not the remotest idea of the humiliation of Him who was God.

This very history of the birth in Matthew and Luke, in its strict scantiness and holy chastity, serves as confirmation for the words of Paul and John, who wholly express the mystery. It is God's working that the child is born, it is God who becomes man, and condescends to us, and in this child, just because and only because it is thus humble, and belongs entirely to us, we have the Messiah, the Savior !

Thus the resurrection of Christ leads us to the knowledge and the acknowledgment of His eternal Godhead, and thus to the knowledge of the miracle without an equal—the incarnation of Him who eternally was and is and shall be God, and nevertheless who became forever man for our good. The resurrection, the resuscitation, He experienced happened to Him because He was man. It is nothing extraordinary, tho it does not issue as the consequence of our humanity *per se*, but rather as a sequence of the grace of God toward us men. Christ rose because He was man, because He was and is like us. But through the resurrection it became possible to Him, the man Jesus, to demonstrate and to prove that He is also the Christ, the Messiah. Whoever experiences and knows this

knows also that He must needs rise, that this was the justification which He must needs experience, even tho no one had attested it to us. But it was impossible that we should fail of a sufficient attestation of this, for it must be experienced that He is a Savior, and this experience with Him as the Savior by the realization of His presence is, in fact, the experience that He actually has risen, has actually returned from death and the realm of the dead to His own, has returned forever, in order to be experienced forever as the Messiah. But to be the Messiah, and allow as one beyond space and time to be experienced as a present Messiah by lost sinners was not human—it was Divine. The Messiah, the anointed of God, the chosen and appointed King of His Kingdom, is God and Lord. He did not *become* God, for this no one can do, but He *is* God yet *became* man in order to be wholly and forever with us, and to be everything that He is for our benefit. This is the miracle of all miracles—incomprehensible, inconceivable, but real and true. The resurrection is a miracle—it is the decisive miracle; on it depends all that concerns Jesus. The incarnation, however, is the greater miracle and the greatest of all miracles to which the resurrection leads us.

The acknowledgment, however, of the miracle of the resurrection, and thereby of the greater miracle of the incarnation, is the acknowledgment of the fact of our pardon, of our redemption. Our pardon, our redemption, is no less wondrous than the fact of the incarnation of Him who is God. One is as certainly a paradox as the other, the reverse of all that is self-evident and consistent, the one no less than the other.

Can I believe the one, my pardon, I can also believe the other, His incarnation; yes, I must believe it, for these two are inseparably united. Pardon with the incarnation of God is a true pardon, by which I, the sinner, have the living God. Without the incarnation it may only be a pardon given in gentle pity for my errors, the mistakes of my wrong development. But the greater these appear to me the more impossible it is to regard them as pardonable through such a slighting of them. For the hour comes certainly in which I must confess what the Psalmist has already confessed thousands of years before: "For mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was changed as with the drought of summer." Well for me, then, if I still have time and strength to betake myself for refuge to the whole, wondrous, unsearchably great mercy of our God!

The resurrection of the man Jesus, the Messiah of God, and the incarnation belong together, as also the incarnation of God and our resurrection, or our redemption till its completion in the resurrection. It is not, however, as if now, after the facts stand before our eyes, *a priori*, the one can be seen as a result of the other, or as if the one could be developed from the other by some rational necessity. On the contrary, we perceive how everything fits in and harmonizes with every other thing, how everything locks together, and how everything is a free Divine deed. Free action is the cause of our redemption, of Christ's resuscitation, of His Messiahship, His incarnation. Everything is by free action. Everything is rational,

but nothing is necessary for reason, rather everything is superrational. Only thus do we understand the way of the Messiah, the way of Jesus to the cross, which He went indeed voluntarily, and yet was, as it were, *compelled* to die. He gave Himself unto death and was "obedient even unto death." He gave His life as a ransom for many, and yet He was delivered up into the hands of men who treated Him as they pleased. "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself"; and yet "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." He had to die that we should have life. "No one," said He, "taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of myself"; and again: "This is your hour and the power of darkness."

Thus this Jesus, this Messiah, actually belongs in the Gospel in spite of Harnack's contradiction. He *is* the Gospel of God for the lost world. He proclaims the Kingdom of God, His disciples proclaim Him the King of the Kingdom, because from the King it follows that the Kingdom exists. Christ is the King; as such He can be known and experienced, and is known and experienced, tho He does not look as if He were a King. In like manner is the Kingdom of God experienced in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, altho it does not look as if it existed in reality as a fulfilment of all Divine promises, as the tenor of all happiness only known and felt by those who were unhappy and lost. The Gospel which Jesus proclaimed was the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and therefore the Gospel about Himself. Therefore

He could say: "If I, by the finger of God, or in power of the Holy Spirit, cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you without your knowledge." Therefore He speaks strangely on the one hand, like John the Baptist: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand," and then again no more like the Baptist, because John spoke of the mightier who was to come after him, whereas Jesus spoke not of another One, but of Himself. Once only did He speak of another One: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in His own name, Him ye will receive." He puts Himself and His authority from the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount to its close over against all authorities to which the people otherwise listen. He says: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is not known and acknowledged as the Messiah, the Son of God, because, according to His appearance, He is nothing but a son of man—a man among men. As a man among men He is the Messiah, the Son of God, from eternity to eternity. This mystery, that the son of man (as He is called by those who would establish their disbelief) is also the Son of God, and that, *vice versa*, the Son of God is the son of man—just this is the blessed mystery of His Messiahship, the mystery of the incarnation of God. Without Him, without His person, without His attitude toward us in time and eternity everything becomes nothing. Only with Him are we something and can do something. Only in and with the Word made known by His presence do we have Him.

In order to obtain that which Harnack calls the

Gospel, one must, in fact, reduce the entire Gospel to the two commandments of love of God and love of neighbor, which, however, are already Old Testament commandments, and appear in the Old Testament, moreover, as comprehension of the whole law. One must not, as is affirmed, deepen but rather empty of its complete fulness of love God's Father's name, which is already known in the Old Testament. One must finally reduce to lower terms, from its infinite value and eminence over all the glory of the world, our knowledge of the infinite worth of the soul of man, tho yet a lost soul—also an Old Testament idea. Reduction! Reduction of the grace of God, reduction of our sin, reduction of our lost estate, reduction of the redeeming love of God, reduction of God's freedom—nothing but reduction is the real Gospel to suffer. To this end we are to eliminate everything which does not fit in order to get a Christ who neither is more than we are, nor can do more than every other man, who is only gifted for His calling! But separation requires only art, not science. Jesus not only belongs in the Gospel, He *is* the Gospel. Gospel is the correlate, the corresponding word for that what the Old Testament promise has in view. It is the message of the fulfilled promise, and there is no Gospel which gives up the fulfilment of the promise. Jesus is the fulfiller; therefore He says: "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." As the fact of the promise is a free gift of God's grace and not a sequence of history (the promise is not, in the phrase of Sophocles, "a child of hope," but, *vice versa*, in Israel the hope is a child of the promise), then its fulfilment is still more appropriately a free gift of God's grace.

But this gift is Jesus, the Son, whom the Father sent not that He should judge the world but that He should save the world. It follows from this that "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." That such is the case every one must confess, even tho he would not have it so.

IX

APPEARANCE OF JESUS AND RECEPTION IN ISRAEL



THE Son of God in the world, the Messiah sent to us by the grace of God, lauded by angels and declared to men, but a human being like other human beings, who did not look as if he were the Son of God—such was the Messiah at His advent. How and whereby should He be known? Since He rose from the dead and came into our experience as the Messiah, through the realization of His self-humiliating love which is stronger than death and hell, all mysteries are now solved and banished, but they are removed only in such a manner that we know the mystery of His appearance no more as a mystery, but as the necessary proof of His Messiahship.

He is born like us, the son of a woman; lying there bedded, indeed, as other men are not bedded; not more glorious and magnificent, but poorer, in a manger, in a trough appointed for the cattle and ordinarily used by cattle. With pains and tears Mary waited for her hour. Now she rejoices that a man is born into the world, but she can tell nobody what has happened to her. She must keep quiet and Joseph must keep quiet, for no one could and would believe them; they would spoil everything from the very start. A vision of angels announces to the shepherds what had taken place: Christ the Lord, the Messiah, is born in the

city of David, in Bethlehem, but poor, lying in swaddling-clothes in a manger. There is no word to tell us who the child is, save that He is the son and heir of David's throne, the long-expected Messiah. They believe this, for to the poor and humble the greatest prospect which is opened is not incredible, which often seems incredible to one who knows the harmonious order of the world. Far less was it incredible to the Israelites, who had yearned so long already for the Messiah that was to avert the judgment of God and heal the miseries of the people. They come and worship and declare what they have seen, but Mary and Joseph are silent, and Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. The inhabitants of Bethlehem hear from the shepherds what they have seen, but no one goes to them and believes that the child of these foot travelers, lying poor in its manger, is the Messiah. But Joseph relied on faith in Him whom he did not see, and called the child, as the angel had bidden him, "Jesus"—*i.e.*, Redeemer, Helper, Savior, Deliverer. Herod hears of Him through the Gentiles who have received a sign, and have now come to inquire where the born King of the Jews is. With the fear arising from a bad conscience he learns the certainty of the truth of this news, and seeks to kill the child. God protects it, but only in such wise that it is hidden from men. The fame of Him is silenced by reason of the great sorrow which Herod's infanticide has brought upon Bethlehem. When Joseph and Mary return from Egypt, and, moreover, not to Bethlehem but to Nazareth, no one knows anything of the child. Jesus is educated in the quiet and obscurity of

the artisan's house, which He leaves only once, when twelve years of age, to go with the parents to Jerusalem. There He finds and feels Himself at home in the temple, in the house of the Father, of His Father. He associates with the priests and scribes, questions them and is questioned of them, as teacher and pupil usually ask and answer each other, and every one wonders at His most promising gifts. But Mary and Joseph feel only pain at His stay; they seek Him for three days, and find Him finally in the temple. When Mary upbraids Him, He does not understand her, but she also does not understand Him, and apprehends not that it was unnecessary for her to seek the child committed to her, because at Jerusalem He could have been in no other place than in the house of Him whom He inwardly called Father in a more perfect sense than that in which any other could address God. Jesus understands her not, but He goes with His parents to Nazareth and is subject unto them, as the law of the Father demanded it. Thus He reaches thirty years of age, Himself a carpenter, like Joseph had been. Thirty years of obscurity of the Son of God in the world! What a humiliation was this for the mother, whose husband had died long ago, and who now, with the other children, turned to Him, the first-born, for guidance! What a humiliating path was this for Jesus to tread! But Mary walked it and He walked it, and tho Mary had to conquer herself, He had not to conquer Himself, but at the most only such temptations as come to Him from the world, as later on, when His brethren tempted Him (John vii : 3).

Then came John (a Judean, related to Jesus but unacquainted with Him, who had grown up in heathenish Galilee), the precursor and preparer of the way of the Messiah. He had received the Divine message of the time which was now to begin and of the Messiah who was to come. John received the instruction for His appearance through the Word of God, which came to him as once to the prophets. Not so was it with Jesus. Jesus must needs go the ways only which the whole people, which every other had to go, when a prophet of God appeared and announced what was to happen. For "The Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets," and the people must needs hear what Jehovah had revealed. John preached and baptized with the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as we have already stated. Jesus went to him, now more deeply moved by the hour which was now come than any of His brothers of the children of Israel, for whom and with whom He felt, believed, hoped, and longed. He had indeed nothing to confess, like the others, that burdened Him as guilt, and therefore, as it seemed, nothing to seek of the Baptist. But that which burdened Him was the guilt which He had to share with His brothers, was the judgment under which they groaned, were the sins which they had committed. The blessing and guilt of the whole people were His blessing and His guilt, the people's faith and hope His faith and His hope, for He thought not of Himself but of His brothers, to whom He belonged, into whose communion He was born, and for whom He had now to carry their sins. John, the prophet of the

Messiah, knows Him for whom he was sent and whom he had hitherto not known. He knows not His name; but he knows His office, and knows, therefore, Him, the bearer of this office. Through Divine illumination it becomes clear to John that this is the man for whom with Israel and for Israel he has waited. On this account he refuses to baptize Him with the baptism which could only symbolize and warrant the forgiveness of sins, the forgiveness which this very Messiah was to bring in the power of God, in the power of the Spirit; and therefore in truth he said: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" We understand this refusal. But do we also understand the answer of Jesus: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"? How for Him and for the Baptist could this belong to righteousness, to that which has God's verdict in its favor, that Jesus should suffer Himself to be baptized, and that John should baptize Him? And yet that Jesus suffered Himself to be baptized is a fact that issues as a consequence of the same human necessity whereby He had become a member of Israel, and therefore for the Baptist it appears as a consequence of his calling that he should baptize this just One for whom he existed. The desire of Jesus was to do the duty and the deeds of One who had humbled Himself to live and to suffer with His brethren, to humble Himself before the living God, and to hope in His goodness. Upon Him rested the burden of the sin and guilt of His people, the chosen people, and still more, that of the other human race. He thought not of Himself, but of us. He suffered under this pressure of the world's guilt, but He

could only shake it off by renouncing us inwardly. Our guilt was His guilt. He carried this complicity with us in His flesh and blood, because He was and is of our flesh and blood. He desired nothing more ardently than forgiveness—forgiveness for us all. Therefore, He humbled Himself and confessed, not His own guilt, and yet that which was His guilt by His complicity in our humanity. He suffered Himself to be baptized like one who has nothing, nothing at all, in which to be preferred above us, save that He suffered where the least of us feels the pressure of guilt which rests on us. He humbles Himself, John baptizes Him, and thereby symbolizes and warrants to Him that for which John waits, in hope that Jesus should not only live to see the redemption as the first-born from the dead, but that He should bring it about by death and resurrection. The water of Jordan which he pours over His head is a symbol of the blood which Jesus shall shed, and so that other, the baptism with which He must be baptized and the cup which Jesus must drink are afterward also mentioned together by Jesus, and the apostle John speaks of water and blood, which together attest to us the reality and truth of Jesus' Messiahship. But when John baptizes Him, the Father seals what John symbolizes. He answers the obedience of His Son, and with the symbol the Word of the Father and the reality of His Spirit unite. God, by this sign, is now to remain forever with Him, not merely as hitherto He has visited His servants, enduing them for their special task and for a short time. Jesus, who was and is eternally like God, but man and our brother, and on this account like us,

has until now lacked the grace of God and the help of God and of His Spirit ; but now He is prepared for the way which lies before Him.

In the power of the Spirit, in the power of the consciousness that the Father is with Him in all things which He will do, He can now accomplish everything which belongs to His calling, and can receive everything that He asks or needs. He is led only by the spirit of His vocation, only by the Father. He sees and hears whatever He is to do and say, because He attends to nothing else but to fulfil His calling for His brethren. He needs no revelations, for He knows at every hour what to do and speak when He looks at His brethren and at the Father, when He sees their disbelief and when He sees their belief, for He knows their hearts and needs not to be told anything. He receives revelations only where He needs the grace of God, God's comfort and strengthening, as at those functions where He had not to deal with us, His brethren, *e.g.*, the mount of the transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane. Having been baptized, what has He now to do? He who in all His surroundings had sufficiently perceived that sin corrupts all men and everything was prepared for His task. The way to the Baptist had been serious enough, and the word by which He forced the Baptist to baptize Him affords to us a profound insight into the depths of the workings of His will toward the resolve to live and to die wholly for the will of the Father and for the salvation of the brethren. He knew His life-problem. That He was called to stand on the side of God and to live for God's purposes among sinners

could not have remained hidden from Him in the thirty years' silence at Nazareth. Now, as it seemed, the moment had come to present Himself to the world as a helper and Savior. The moment seemed favorable. Thus far nothing more had taken place than the declaration of the Baptist. This, however, had prepared the people to receive the Messiah exultantly if He only came. Forgiveness of sins, and in its power freedom from all distress; deliverance from their enemies, the Romans; liberty from all misery—who is there that has not desired all this? That Jesus did not share the so-called Messianic ideal, or the Messianic ideas of the people, was a matter of course for Him who suffered more under the pressure of sin than those who committed it. But there were others, particularly among those who had come to John, who also did not share this view. According to them, the Messianic help was to consist in the abolition of all oppression. They wanted forgiveness only because they were in oppression. Neither was Jesus nor were they of the opinion that their oppressed condition is to be blamed for all sins. On the contrary, Jesus was no social democrat, nor were these Israelites such. Yet it made a difference whether the grace of God is sought for the forgiveness it brings or for deliverance. Jesus is here in behalf of people who feel and think as He feels and thinks. Was not now the time to appear before them and to manifest Himself to the people, in order to cure them at the same time from the error of their thoughts and from their false Messianic ideas?

But the spirit of His calling directed Him not to men, but into the desert far away from men. It was

not an unconscious, obscure impulse which He followed; but with a clear consciousness, filled with the conviction of the task He was to do, He saw that first and nearest to Him a hard struggle impended. It was not a struggle with His own wish and will, with His own heart; He was and remained at one with the Father's will, and never resigned Himself to illusions concerning His task and duty. Still less had He to struggle inwardly with the thoughts and notions of men; about this He was clear, even when He bowed under the hand of the Baptist. It was the struggle with Satan which was before Him, and which had to be fought out first before He could teach the people. It was a struggle with the enemy of God and men, whose world-dominion had to be broken. Fasting and praying He spends His time, for it is only in the unbroken communion with the Father, maintained with all earnestness, that Satan can be overcome. At last the struggle begins. He was hungry; now Satan has found an opportunity to approach Him temptingly: "If Thou art the Son of God, in the grace of God as the chosen Messiah, at whose command everything is, then command that these stones become bread!" Of the stones God was to raise up children unto Abraham—why should the Son of God not be able to supply Himself with bread out of the stones? And whom should He wrong thereby? Not those who afterward mocked Him on the cross: "He saved others, Himself He can not save." But not thus can He fulfil His calling. With a few loaves He could miraculously feed thousands, as He afterward repeatedly showed. Here, however, He would have used His wondrous power, not for

others, but for His own benefit. He, who desired nothing other than to be obedient to the Father's will, to bind men again to the Father; He, who wished only to exist for men, to live for them, to work for them, in order to fulfil the Father's will, would have receded in the very beginning from God's way, would have cared for Himself, would have declined the sacrifices and sufferings which His way and calling required of Him. He dared not. His way was pointed out to Him with and by His calling. He must entirely rely on the Father. He answered Satan: "It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

As Son of the Father, having thus refused this demand, He is now in spirit taken along by Satan and set on the pinnacle of the temple on His Father's house, where He is shown the people—the multitudes waiting in the forecourts for the blessing and longing for salvation, or those who have come to visit the temple. Satan reminds Jesus, who had confuted Him with the Word of God, of the Scripture which says: "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone." This might, indeed, appear to be so to him who only asked after God's Word and will. There in Psalm xci we read, indeed: "To keep thee in all thy ways." Was this not the way which He had to go, was obliged to go, away to the people who, as He knew, now waited here for the deed of God which was to bring deliverance? Jesus had, indeed, the power to summon God's angels to His service; He Himself said it afterward when, in the night of

His sufferings, Peter meant to defend Him with the sword: "Thinkest thou that I can not beseech my Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" But neither now nor then is the time which shall afterward come when He shall appear in His glory, and all the angels with Him. It is not the Father who shows Him this way. The Father was silent, and Jesus knew that He had not come to use force, were it even to be manifested as the power of the sight of His Divine Majesty. He knew that His way was a different one, that He had to suffer and endure whatever the renunciation of His heavenly glory demanded. He refused the temptation with the Word: "Again it is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Beyond that Word, let the way be ever so difficult, He can not go.

Now, Satan shows Him from an exceedingly high mountain all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. This world Jesus seeks to win—for it and in it He will live, He will work, He will show His power; it is to be His that it may have peace. Jesus is to have it, provided He falls down and worships him (Satan). Every man has his price; the higher he stands, the greater is the price for which he can be had. Jesus—thus thinks Satan—is to be had for the price of the whole world, since here is a simple, safe way to obtain it. One needs only to renounce God and give the honor to him who has the dominion in the world. One needs only to leave behind him God, the fear of God, and faith in God. On the other hand, one must resolutely resign himself to persecution to the utmost, even unto death. To be

sure, Jesus was already decided. Rather renounce everything and blindly trust in the Father and go God's ways—this was the answer which He had thus far given. For Satan nothing more was left than to step forth openly, to demand and offer, even tho in the realization of his defeat. But for Jesus nothing else was left for Him but to put up also with this most revolting of all demands, this buffet in the face, for the sake of men who a thousand times follow such demands, whom He meant not to destroy but to save. They would not understand Him. But what would happen if, in His wrath, He should trample Satan under His feet? His wrath would reach farther, and devour every one who, for the sake of gaining the world, has abandoned the living God. He dare not act, He dare not rebel, He dare not rely upon His Divine endowment of power. He can only rely upon His present task, and this is prescribed to Him: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Faith and obedience: these are the only weapons which are at the command of Him who became man—a sign again that the incarnation is the humiliation of Him to whom as God and Lord everything belongs, and who as God and Lord can do everything. It will and must come to this, that the kingdoms of the world are become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. They already are His, and He would destroy them if He had only come to act consistently with the world. But for this He had not come. He came to save the sinful and, therefore, lost world—His world. The way to this goal can only be a way of suffering. Jesus will and must suffer all, as

He Himself also says at the end of His way : "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

The victory is obtained. Jesus has not had to battle with images of His own heart, or even merely of His imagination—as if mind-pictures did not come out of the heart ! Still less has He had to fight with the imagination of that which the world offered to Him and pressed upon Him ; for He was in the wilderness, and what He was to do in the world He had agreed upon long ago with the Father. The Father had accepted His vow and had given Him a promise, which went far beyond all the power of the world. Jesus had to fight with the power which stands invisibly but really behind the world, and keeps fast hold upon it, and drives it from sin to sin. Jesus has conquered, and now returns from the wilderness to the world, of which He now knows quite certainly what reception it will prepare for Him—not with the joy of victory, but with the seriousness of death.

He can not come with a great show of power, He can not lay claim with force and might to His right to sit upon the throne of David and to rule over Israel, and thence over the kingdom of the world, because with force and might sin can not be overcome, it can only be condemned. The time should come, indeed, as symbolically it had often already occurred in Israel's history, that judgment will begin at the house of God. But this will only be when it has been determined whether the world will be helped by Jesus. But for the time being it remains, as Jesus often declared, that the Father has sent the Son, not to judge the world, but to save it ; that He did not come to

destroy the souls of men, but to redeem them. On this account He must endure all things. There is no more difficult work than to redeem sinners from their sins and guilt. The spiritual preparation which He received at His baptism in Jordan has given Him everything which He needs for His calling—strength to work and strength to suffer—and in this strength He goes His way, the way which He needs must go. He has the Father, to whom He belongs forever, even now belongs, altho He has renounced His equality with God; this is all He has, yet, having it, He has enough.

He returns to the place where John baptized, and finds at first no one. But on the following day He finds two disciples, and by and by four others. He finds them by showing Himself to them as the One who knows their sin and the burden resting on them, and, in His joy over these few, He promises them that they shall see greater things issuing from the communion between the Father and Himself that shall give them confidence as to the fulfilling of all the promises of God. They can, therefore, be composed when He does not meet every injustice with force and destroy it. But, on the other hand, great as was the confidence which He had Himself and with which He tried to imbue His disciples, He never resigned Himself to illusions. From the beginning His task lies clearly before Him. He will not first revert all the misery and remove all the outward oppression and violence from His people, as if thereby sin also would cease. The word in the song of Zacharias is not thus to be understood: “That we being delivered out of the hand of

our enemies, should serve Him without fear all our days." The closing words of this song show that forgiveness of sins is the main condition of every amelioration of the outward condition, and that in this consists the knowledge of salvation. Jesus knows that He has to deal with sin, and not only indeed with the sin which oppresses, but first with the sin of the oppressed themselves. It is this idea to which He unreservedly gives expression in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the light of this idea we see why He closes with the woe upon those who only say to Him: "Lord, Lord," but do not the will of His Father. In this struggle certainly He dreams not of speedy victories. This He can not do, because as no other He knows the power of sin. Because He never experienced it in Himself, He has seen the more plainly how it destroys everything. This one must keep in view if he wishes to understand Christ's way. Savior of sinners He is to be and must be—it is this certainty that showed Him His way, and prepared for Him His destiny, and therefore He was clear from the beginning about that which awaited Him.

As we have already stated, He proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and spoke of the Father, to whom the people so often and so ardently prayed for deliverance. How could He depend upon inspiring faith in His words about this Kingdom having come near, and about the mercy of the Father who has risen to deliver His people? For where was the Kingdom of God's dominion when the rule of the mighty, of the men in seats of power, of the oppressors, had not been broken, when everything remained as it

was? By what means could the truth of His prediction be known? That He was right in every word which He spoke against sin and against sinners—not only against the sin of the oppressors, but also against the sin of the oppressed—this every one might concede if he would. That He rigidly rejected sin; that He struck at and condemned it in its innermost, finest form, was, first of all, the warrant for His appearance as a successor of the Baptist. But that with this rigid judgment He announced, nevertheless, the fulfilment of all promises of God, and set forth the inscrutable mercy of God—this legitimated the Word through a wondrous union of judgment and mercy which first of all appeared like a promise. So had it always been in Israel. The promise had always been legitimated by the judgment. Whoever believed the promise only did so by subjecting himself at the same time to the judgment which was exercised by the same God in whom the people put its hope. To this was now added a third fact: that Jesus spoke no more of another one, of a mightier, who was to come after Him, but of Himself, whose office it was to bring everything, to give everything, and to realize the whole plan of God. His mission no more concerned the promise and the future. It concerned the present, and the future only so far as He, the presence which He brought, had in Himself the promise of the future. And that this was truth could be perceived from the very seriousness with which He spoke of judgment, and forced every one who believed Him to execute judgment on himself ere the great hour of judgment came over the whole world. That His miraculous activity was

to support this belief, but that it remained fruitless, we shall see afterward.

It was nothing new what Jesus demanded when with His words and His silences He urged the hearers to use all seriousness in betaking themselves to their self-judgment. It was also nothing new which He demanded when He deepened the requirements of the law, as some one has said. This deepening was not new, indeed, but only inconvenient to the exact performers of religion. Nor was the Father's name of God new, tho it has never been so strongly, so energetically used as now. That which was new was the fulfilment of the promise, the presence of God, who now exercises His dominion, the presence of Jesus, the words about Himself—the word: “It is I.” This was, indeed, the greatest word which could be said, which no one but Jesus ever could dare to say—a word which He to-day yet repeats and confirms when He speaks to us. Therefore said Peter, at the close of the address in which Jesus had presented and offered Himself as the bread of life: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the word of eternal life.” Everything which men can otherwise devise and contrive is, like all the works of their strength and art, only for the dust and for death. What Jesus speaks is for eternity, for He is present and stands forever by His word. The grace of God, which lasts from eternity to eternity, has in Him entered into time, has acquired the potency of the present, and remains forever as present. He speaks of Himself and offers Himself to men: *He is the Gospel.*

True, His words made a deep impression not only on

a few, but on the masses. Thousands followed Him, and for whole days stayed with Him that they might not lose a word of that which He said. This happened not only once or twice, but again and again. "And there were gathered unto Him great multitudes, for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes." "And there followed him great multitudes." "On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And there were gathered unto Him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat ; and all the multitude stood on the beach." "For the people all hung upon him, listening." "Never man so spake," said the officers of the chief priests who were sent out to take him. But the effect was little : a few over five hundred, including His disciples, and besides some women, which ministered unto Him of their substance ; these were all of His followers ! And yet He had come for the whole people and wished to satisfy the longing of the whole people.

How came this about ? It was a consequence of the deep seriousness of the self-judgment which He asserted and demanded in the power of God. At all times the holy seriousness of the Divine demands and the dread of the Divine judgment find a willing ear. Men also rejoice in the loveliness and graciousness of the Gospel, but it does not move the hearts so deeply as the seriousness of the demands. But when it means to *take* things seriously and to *believe*, when men are about to be put into the possession of grace, then they withdraw. For melancholy and sad as it may sound, it is nevertheless true : Men love darkness, the soreness of their hurt, the lost estate in which they are, more than light

and healing and restoration—they love death more than life. This would be inconceivable if it were not still the same to-day. On this account the people do not make their decision for Him. Jesus has to take from them the benefit of His free speech about the Kingdom of God, the goal of all their hope. He speaks clearly only to the disciples of the manner in which the Kingdom of God exists in secrecy, and is sought by some and found by others. It is truly the Kingdom of God which shall some day fill the world when judgment has been held ; and from this Kingdom all offenders and all evil-doers must be cast out. We can understand how to the disciples this prophecy could become clear because of that which they had in Jesus and which no one else believed, while at the same time these speeches made the darkness still darker for others. It is true, then, that there is a judgment which even the most faithful love can not avert !

To the end the people remained in their indecision. Jesus had enemies. He was hated as fiercely as those who as God's servants were His types in the Old Testament. He was hated as never a man was hated before or since, and this by the leaders of the people, the authorities of Israel, the representatives of the law—the Pharisees, scribes, and priests. They were called to be the first witnesses of the Messiah, but this they were not. Jesus, indeed, did not seek them, altho He especially gave the priests the honor due them when, in directing to them the lepers whom He had healed, He instructed these to show themselves to the priests “for a testimony unto them.” Jesus did not need the witness of the priests, for if He was really the Mes-

siah He would be known as such by every one who wished to know. But He had come in a guise entirely different from what the priests expected, not at all like one who comes from heaven and whom one knows, as the astronomers perceive a phenomenon in the sky and know how to estimate it. If His claim was unauthorized, then He was a misfortune to Israel through the power He had of misleading them. If His claim was authorized, His judgment established, His demands justified, if He was the gift of God for His people, that was the end of them and their authority which they had acquired—an end of the position of the nobility of the nation and the privileges which they enjoyed, the rights of the priesthood, the domination of the high priests. But this they could not bear. They had decided long ago to kill Him. He *should* not be the Messiah, He *could* not be; of this they were persuaded. But the opportunity had not yet been found, for even unto the week of passion they were afraid of the people. At last, at last, the opportunity came.

As already stated, Jesus had never given Himself up to illusions. He never needed to exchange His so-called Messianic ideal for another more correspondent to the lower reality. He had a truer reality. He were not at all the helper given by God Himself to the world had He given Himself to illusions, had He not completely understood sin, had He not fully estimated the cost from the beginning, had He confided too much in Himself. *From the beginning He had reckoned with the thought of death*: at the cleansing of the temple, which John narrates, as well as in the Sermon on the Mount and the sending of the twelve, as Matthew

narrates. True, He spoke openly and unreservedly only to the disciples at Cæsarea Philippi, and, from that time onward, of the necessity that He must die, yet even then they did not understand how it could come to this; much less had they understood the earlier intimations. John the evangelist specifically tells us that the saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," which had reference to the temple of His body, and thus to death and resurrection, was understood neither by the disciples nor by the "Jews." How could they then understand what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, of being reviled and persecuted for the sake of His name, or in the address in Matthew, when sending out His disciples, of being hated for the sake of His name? How could they understand what He said of the cross, under which one should follow Him? That this word is not a later interpolation is a matter of course to the reader who knows how the Jews, in Biblical language, used to speak of the cross, which since the Roman rule began had stared at them on all roads. They said, *e.g.*, of Isaac, when he carried the wood for the sacrifice on the mount: "Isaac was loaded with the wood, like one who carried his own cross on his shoulder." Thus it is not at all necessary to suppose that Jesus intended by His words to signify beforehand the manner of His death, but He expresses thus the fact that the world, Jews and Gentiles, will cast Him out and deliver Him to death. Why should this not have been evident to Him? We can understand that the disciples did not comprehend it, did not, indeed, comprehend it at all before it had come about, did not


even then comprehend it, but abandoned their faith. But what interest have we to deny a fact which was surprising even to its narrators, the evangelists, and still just on that account was narrated by them?

No, even the disciples were not fully and forever won for the Lord. Even they did not wholly understand Him till He was dead and risen. True, Jesus thus praised the Father: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes," and in accordance with this He revealed unto them the Father and the Father revealed unto them the Son. But even in this company of the disciples, only a day before the death of Jesus, the petition is nevertheless uttered: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us!" To which Jesus answers: "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And thus might they lay hold of Him, and grasp and keep Him; and thus could they know everything and have everything—yes, wholly in Him and from Him. What, then, was still necessary in order to know Jesus wholly, to have Him forever, and to become through Him a child of God?

Should it be the miracles? But no, they belonged to the manifestation of Jesus, to His Messianic self-attestation. Only they had no effect at the time when they took place; whatever effect they might work, they have worked only afterward. Let us see how they are to be understood and what they mean.

X

THE MIRACLE-MINISTRY OF JESUS

ESUS spoke and testified of the Kingdom of God which had come and was at hand, the sum of all blessedness, and the eternal good which God promised before to His own, prepared for them from the beginning of the world, and now at length offered. It does not, indeed, look as if all who were in this Kingdom had peace. They had still to endure the world-sorrow which others have also to bear—yes, perhaps they feel it still more. But they can bear it. 'The Kingdom which they had, or for which they still waited, makes them strong to bear it. How could He prove this? Jesus and the Kingdom belonged together; what did He give of the good of His Kingdom? "Thy sins are forgiven." He spoke to the man sick of the palsy, and to the great sinner. *To bring forgiveness*—on this depended and toward this was aimed all His work. But just this was not acknowledged. "He blasphemeth; who can forgive sins but one, even God?" said they who were there in the presence of the man sick of the palsy, the scribes and Pharisees. By what means did Jesus prove that He can do this? For He had to prove it; He was not yet crucified and risen.

All that Jesus spoke, His whole manifest career, was accompanied by miracles, and, indeed, by such miracles as had never been in Israel. Israel was the

people who had, as no other people, a distinct and clear conception of the closed, orderly sequence of life and experience in nature and history from which sequence, by his own strength, no man can escape, even tho one means to master it, and to a certain point really does master it. It is flatly wrong to affirm that Israel was accustomed at every stage of its history to experience miracles. The contrary rather is correct. Only at decisive points of Israel's history have miracles happened, as at the deliverance from Egypt's bondage through Moses, at the appearance of the two prophets Elijah and Elisha in the time of Israel's apostasy, and in connection with some individual prophets—*e.g.*, Isaiah at the time of Hezekiah's sickness. It was because miracles belonged to the great critical times that they expected miracles of the Messiah—yes, a miracle above all miracles—and were not satisfied with what He had already done, but sought of Him a sign from heaven. It was not, by the very supposition, something normal which they sought, and which they believed they could find everywhere, but, on the contrary, something very extraordinary. This miracle, however, Jesus will not perform, but instead, in the most severe manner, he sends back the sign-seeking Pharisees and Sadducees. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And He left them, and departed," we read in Matthew xvi: 4. And this is characteristic of the supposed primitive view of our evangelists. Jesus refuses this miracle with the same gravity with which He had spoken to the nobleman who asked help for his son at the point

of death: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe," and for the same reason which led Him to forego a miracle at Nazareth, His home: *because they believed not in Him*. Otherwise, however, He did miracles not only where they believed in Him, but even where they did not yet believe in Him, and where no decision against Him had yet been made or was expected, so that, in case men would not believe His words, they could nevertheless believe on account of the works which He did.

These works, His miracles, were all, however, of a special kind, like and yet again unlike all the miracles which had previously been done in Israel. He performed no miracle to protect Himself against His enemies, as did Moses and Elijah. Once only did Jesus perform a judgment-miracle, and then only to typify how Israel will fare by continuing in disbelief. This was the cursing of the fig-tree, which against its nature had leaves but no fruit, and which immediately withered away at Jesus' word. Once it might seem as if Jesus had used His wondrous power for Himself, for His own benefit—namely, when He rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and there was a calm. But He did this not for Himself. In the midst of the raging of the storm and sea He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and only when the disciples awoke Him, and said unto Him, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" did He rebuke the wind and the sea—yet He also rebuked the disciples for their little faith. For as people who believed in Jesus they should have known and considered that nothing evil could befall them as long as Jesus was with them.

They had, therefore, not needed this miracle, which Jesus did out of pure forbearance and mercy toward them.

The miracles which Jesus did were all healing wonders, and were not done for the benefit of those who laid wait for Him, to find something against Him, but for the benefit of those who came to Him, brought their sick to Him, or came in their own distress to be helped by Him. It was, moreover, not an exception, as in the case of the Old Testament history, when He did miracles; it was rather an exception, as at Nazareth, when He did no miracles. Thus we may say that the day of His work ended and the night commenced only with His seizure in the garden. Wherever He went and stayed He did miracles, and "as many as touched Him were made whole." This had never before happened in Israel. Therefore, John the Baptist, when he was in prison and heard the works of Christ, sent to Him and said unto Him: "Art thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" For if any man might expect that the Messiah should assist him and obtain for him, through His miraculous power, his rights and liberty, and imprisonment and death for his enemies, this was, as one would think, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. Christ's answer authenticates the universality of His miracles, and proves that the time of fulfilling the prophesy has come: "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." But He does not help the Baptist; he must suffer and die; and Christ

adds, "Blessed is he whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in Me"—certainly a singular prophecy. The Kingdom of God is at hand: "But if I, by the finger of God, or by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, then, without you knowing it, is the Kingdom of God come upon you." The Kingdom of God is at hand, and those who should enjoy it first profit nothing and gain nothing by it. How is that? How issues and what means this double form of miracles, and what is their difference from all former miracles which have been wrought? Miracles are wonderful works, events produced by mediate causes undiscernible by us or not existing for us—thus they have been defined. Are these of Jesus really different from the Old Testament miracles?

What are miracles? This is the first question. Is it really enough to say, according to the time-worn objection to miracles, as well as the newest explanation of Harnack, that they are phenomena or effects which are not to be explained from the known, unbroken order of nature and history? This only means "According to the unbroken order known to us"—*i.e.*, the unbroken order known at the time when the phenomena took place. Certain miracles which are absolutely not to be explained—as the stilling of the storm on the sea—are roundly and emphatically denied. "That a storm on the sea has been stilled by a word," says Harnack, "we do not believe and will never again believe." But the healing miracles, so far as their historicity is conceded, are regarded as miracles—*i.e.*, as influences of a firm will and a convinced faith even upon the bodily life which "interest us like mira-

cles." Harnack says : " Surely miracles do not happen, but there is much that is miraculous and inexplicable." " We are not locked up in a blind and brutal course of nature, but . . . nature serves higher purposes, and one may so come up against it by an inner Divine power that all things shall work together for good." This " coming up against nature " yields us " experiences " which are ever felt " as miracles," and these experiences are inseparable from every " higher religion," and, indeed, are experiences for the life of the individual as well as the great course of the history of humanity. " How clean and clear," Harnack ironically continues, " must be the thinking of a religious man who, while he himself is able to adhere to the knowledge of the inviolability of the limited course of events, nevertheless can be surprised that even great minds are not able clearly to separate these realms."

But all this would only or chiefly cover effects of faith or of the firm will upon events that happen to one's own person. It is remarkable, however, that all the Biblical miracle accounts, and more especially those of the New Testament, refer, not to effects of miracle-workers on their own persons, but to effects on others. From beginning to end Christ refuses to perform miracles for His own benefit, especially for the preservation of His own life. As related in the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul waits not for a miracle by which he should be helped; and when at Melitta he is bitten by a viper without being hurt, the miracle happens not for his sake, but for those who saw it. Christ does not provide for His own food

by a miracle, as God once cared for Elijah through the ravens, and as Elijah himself provided the oil in the cruse and the meal in the barrel of the widow at Zarephath. Christ's miracles are throughout effects on others and for others. Are these to be explained by the phrase "The influence of a firm will and convinced faith," even upon the bodily life? Perhaps they might be explained as instances of hypnosis or suggestion? Then they would at once cease to be real miracles, and from that hour on they could no more claim religious importance where their nature should be known. They appear, then, in the light of delusion from religious motives and for religious objects. If this imposture should not be ascribed to the apostles and evangelists, in so far as they have been themselves deceived, should it be charged; nevertheless, upon Jesus? Or if these miracles have not been produced by hypnosis or suggestion, but by a real influence of strong will and conviction, has the historian elsewhere in history perceived such influences, save in the tales and legends of the middle ages? But when with Harnack one still allows "something impenetrable" in the accounts of the miracles, which may possibly become comprehensible to future generations, and the paradox of which is entirely to disappear, one will be obliged to say that a weaker argument against the miracles has hardly ever come to light. It would have been more intelligible to acknowledge the "impenetrability" of all the accounts and to deny their truth than to make this unhappy effort at an explanation of their origin, for this comes to the same thing.

Neither is this effort to acknowledge miracles with-

out allowing them to be miracles justified by citing the "certain contempt" with which Jesus Himself is said to speak of His miracles. We have rather to put together the facts: that Jesus reproaches the nobleman, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe," that He refers the Baptist in the prison to the wonders which happen, and that He says to the Jews, "Tho ye believe not Me, believe the works which I do in My Father's name." According to this, miracles must belong to the person and office of Jesus the Messiah. But the question is, How? Miracles, and this is the point, were not common in Israel. On heathenish territory miracles never were wrought by Jesus, and He refuses to do a miracle on the daughter of the Syrophenician woman. Only after the mother had humbled herself still deeper, as once Naaman, the captain of the King of Syria, had done, does He help in an exceptional way. For the woman has shown faith, great faith. He heals the servant of the centurion at Capernaum, but on Jewish soil and at the intercession of the Jews. There must in every case be included all the special features by which the peculiarity of all miracles, as well as the distinct peculiarity of Christ's miracles, is marked. These features are the more important, since they are not to be accounted for as a tradition knowingly set forth as such, but are inextricably interwoven with the facts themselves.

One thing, however, is possible — namely, that the miracle accounts were the expression of a belief in the hearing of prayer. Israel, as we have stated, had the strong consciousness of a firmly closed connection of

cause and effect in nature and history. For this very reason the pious clung to the God who had chosen them, that they should not be ground by this inexorable order; and they were heard when they prayed, or thought they were heard. What they then experienced in this manner in connection with their life of prayer, directed to God and drawing from God, was in the narrative developed by their shaping fancy into miracle. Is this so? No, not if there *is* hearing of prayer! If there is not, then indeed we shall have still less miracle, for it would follow that there is no God at all who acts freely and demands free faith on the part of men, and what we call faith would remain either merely a compliance with God's hidden ways, or a contented and happy confidence in God's wisdom which has ordered everything from eternity, with a conviction that not the brutal world-order but God's wisdom triumphs. For a free action of God, and especially for an action of that God whom we can induce with our prayers, there is no room. But so long as prayer is an indispensable expression of our religious life, and daily hearing of prayer is believed and experienced by us, so long do we also distinguish between hearing of prayer and miracle. It is not that hearing of prayer is a miracle which has happened in consequence of our praying. The true miracle originates from Divine initiative. For miracles, too, and especially the miracles of Jesus, are a hearing of prayer. But tho, indeed, miracles are hearings of prayer, still it is not the nature of the hearing of prayer to be a miracle—at least, so long as we do not, with Harnack, decide to regard every influence of freedom upon the forced order of nature

and history as a paradox and therefore as a miracle. The Lord refers His believers to the hearing of prayer, which they are to experience daily, but not to miracles. Hearing of prayer is the daily orderly experience of His children ; miracles are not daily, are also something extraordinary for the children of the house of God. The hearing of prayer belongs to that government of God in history of which it is said that He fashions the hearts of men, and even cares for the birds of the heaven, the flowers of the field, the sparrows on the roof, that not one of them fall to the ground without His will. This His disciples shall remember, and when they are brought before kings and princes for judgment they shall not be anxious how or what they shall speak, for it shall be given them in that hour. But such giving is no miracle, tho it is known and felt as a gift, as an effect of God's grace. Miracles are, indeed, hearing of prayer, but hearing of that prayer which is for miracles. But we do not pray for miracles unless we have to pray for them, because the distress of the congregation and of God's witnesses against the sin of the world impels us to it. Jesus prayed for them, His disciples have prayed for them, but not arbitrarily ; for a miracle is something very special. The miracle takes place through the Word and at the Word. When the Word is spoken it comes to pass. Recovery from sickness which gradually takes place, not at once and completely, at the Word, can be God's gift, a hearing of prayer, but it is no miracle. Neither do miracles happen by way of accelerating a process of nature. This they never are, not even in the turning of water into wine at the

marriage in Cana, nor still less in the feeding of the five thousand, and of the four thousand in the wilderness. Where a miracle takes place the connection between the Word and the event is always manifest, tho not to them to whom the Word is impotent. Save that the greater part of these beholders may feel the need to inquire more seriously into the relation of effect and cause, all miracles appear to them to belong only in the mass of things and events not understood or conceivable, of which the course of the world is at all times full. On this account Jesus' miracles are miracles only for those who followed Him either for a time or always. To such they are indeed real. For the others they mean nothing, and thus we understand why Jesus performs no miracles where He finds no faith at all.

But what are miracles, and what do they denote? They only happen in Israel, among the people chosen for redemption. They thus stand in connection with this destiny of Israel, with redemption; they are deeds of that God who will show to His people by goodness and severity that He alone is the God of redemption, who will not expose His people to the law of sin and guilt, which is to say to the law of development, but will deliver them from perdition. Whether they are miracles of judgment or miracles of grace, they are always the exact contrary of what one would expect to occur in accordance with the natural order of things, in the expected place, and at the expected time. They are *intentionally counter-effects against this natural order of things*, and, therefore, decidedly against the orderly sequence of nature; not in

general, for this general order remains till the end comes, but in the special case, which is thereby taken out of the order without injury to the order itself. This world-order is in a thousand cases a pressure, a burden for those who suffer thereby, and we, too, seek to oppose it—we by affecting other causes, God with His might and power by abolishing the cause. The suffering, tho not always a result of a certain sin, stands, nevertheless, in an indissoluble connection with the sin of the world. If there were no sin and suffering, miracles had never happened. But where God intervenes with His revelation, not merely a communication about Himself, but with His own practical proof of Himself to bring about the redemption of the sinful race, there we meet with miracles. Indeed, not everywhere, not wherever men may happen to think that they need one, but only according to His own counsel, only in the harmonious ordering of His ways, and only in the very remarkable conditions of this Divine order. In the time of the Old Covenant miracles happen for the purpose of judgment and grace, as through Moses and Elijah. With Christ and through Him they happen in connection with His office as Redeemer only as miracles of help and salvation. They are the infallible sign of the Redeemer, who came at last and is present with us. He *must* needs do wonders; it is an exception when, as in Nazareth, He can do no miracle, not as if He had been lacking in power, but because men refused Him from the very outset. Where distress and misery come in His way He helps—of course, only when He meets with them on His appointed way, on the ways of His

calling. He does not in the whole country and with one stroke turn all lamentation and all sorrow into joy. He lets His forerunner, John, suffer; He does not help him, who, humanly speaking, had the first claim that the Messiah should show in him His wondrous power, the might of His Messiahship. But Jesus says: "Blessed is he whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in Me"; therefore, suffer, die, and believe! In other cases, however, He helps, and, indeed, not only where He is asked, but also unsolicited, as at the marriage feast in Cana, in the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand, in the healing of the sick by the pool Bethesda, and in the healing of the man born blind. For His people are to have a *sign* of the arrival of Him who has the power to help the whole world. This power is the sign of the Messiah. On this account, moreover, the people that had witnessed the wondrous feeding of the multitude wanted to seize Him and make Him King, as if men had to *make* Him King whom God has chosen as such. On this account He groaned in Himself at the tomb of Lazarus, because the death of Lazarus at the hand of Satan is an attempt to prove that Jesus can not be the Messiah, since He is not able to protect even His nearest friends. Therefore, praying, He says: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me always," and calls Lazarus back into life, tho he has already been four days in the grave and decay has already begun.

Thus, Jesus' miracles are testimonies of His vocation, and, indeed, the healing and helping miracles are witnesses that He came not to condemn but to save. Thus it is that He combines in the answer which He

sends to the Baptist in His temptation, His miracles, and the preaching of the Gospel ; thus it is that the universality of the miracles is just as truly emphasized in this manner as in the apocalyptic vision of the new heaven and the new earth : " Neither shall there be any more mourning, nor crying, nor pain, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Thus, also, the miracles of Jesus are not merely signs but prophecies, not for our time, and in general neither for the time of the history of the world, nor for that of the history of the Church, but for the great wonder of the final term, the completion of the work of salvation.

Just at this point the question as to the possibility and reality of miracles comes in. Whoever once has suffered misery and distress knows very well that all this sorrow comes from the unbroken order in nature and history, within which we are shut up as sinners and as accessories. Our longing is a longing after redemption. Not that we could become lords over this world order. The longing after the liberty of the glory of the children of God, as Paul calls it, is something else. The Christian is not to despair, least of all is he to be put out of humor and be alienated from faith through his suffering, whether merited or unmerited. He is to have and retain peace in God's grace, and even in weakness he is to experience, like Paul, the power of grace, which helps him not only to believe, but also to bear witness of the wondrous undiminishing of the grace of God. And he is to hope, hope in a deed of God our Savior, in the deed of the great renewing of the world according to His Word :

“Behold, I make all things new!” This renewing is not the result of development, but the contrary. The result of development would be perdition. The restoration of the world is the end of God’s ways for our redemption and renewing, and these ways are from beginning to end the very opposite of all self-evident truth. The method here is not development but transformation, as the individual can not develop himself into a child of God, into a new creature, so neither can the world into a new world. In the ways of God, which, step by step, are to bring the world to be a new world, the experience repeats itself: “Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.” If we are convinced of what Jesus shall sometime do we are also convinced of what He once did. The certainty of the miracle of the final renewal of the world carries with it and works out the certainty of faith with regard to the miracles which He did. We can not have and we do not need a Savior who can not do miracles and who has not really done them.

The working forces of Jesus, the power with which He, the man of low estate, was endowed for His office, wrought in Him to such effect that He was able Himself *to suffer and to die solely to help others*. The help which He brought to us is wondrous help. It is provided in the fact that He can do what none else can do—neither father, nor mother, nor the most powerful on earth: take away sins. He Himself unites this ability with His miracle-activity when He asks the murmuring scribes: “Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and walk?” The

easier act, the miracle, is, however, so great that it can only be a sign of a greater, yes, the greatest—a sign, namely, of the power to forgive sins. For forgiveness never was and never is something that stands by itself. It is and remains connected with Jesus. It is connected with Him when He says at the institution of the Supper: “This is my body, my blood, given and shed for you unto remission of sins”; it is connected with Him again when He brings it to pass in the case of the man sick of the palsy; it is connected with Him still again for David, for Abraham, because they believed in that God whose eternal counsel it was to realize all His thoughts of grace in and through Jesus. In the same power by which Jesus foregoes everything, so that forgiveness became and remained ours, he performs the miracles. They are partly to effect the understanding of His calling as a Savior which embraces the whole world, partly to effect faith in those who wish to understand Him, and partly for those who already believe in Him, that they may anticipate in their experience the much greater things which they shall yet see.

From this it becomes also evident why Jesus did not desire His miracles to become known in the land, since *as to their purpose and tenor they became only intelligible in connection with His Gospel and His person*. On the other hand, the importance that He Himself attached to them, and which the people’s expectation attached to them, becomes very evident when we read that of the multitude many believed in Him, and they said: “When Christ [*i.e.*, the Messiah] shall come, will He do more signs than those which this man hath

done?" Thus it becomes evident, further, that we can not at all dispense with the miracles in the history of God's self-attestation for our redemption or in the history of revelation, and especially in the history of Jesus and the accomplishment of our redemption. This is not to say that we can not dispense with them. Not because we could believe in Jesus only through them and by their assistance; this could not be true of us, because we see them not, but must be informed of them. We can not dispense with them because we know Him and believe in Him as the Lord of all things to whom all is given by His Father. The miracles show us bound up with that which we believe and in which we hope. *We believe not in Jesus for the sake of the miracles, but we believe the miracles for Jesus' sake.* The history of Jesus were not the history of the Messiah, and therewith the history of the effectuation of our redemption, if it were not at the same time a history full of wonders. They belong to the history, and can not be separated from it. He who gives them up must give up the Messiahship of Jesus—must state, like Harnack, that Jesus does not belong to the Gospel. They are necessary, but they are necessary not primarily but secondarily.

Finally, we may now the better understand *the lack of miracles in the Church in later historical times*, in our own time. We know and have the greater miracle, the miracle of our pardon: "In Christ we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." Therefore, we should now wait for the greatest miracle: the completion of the redemption. We have the Savior, and in Him the eternal super-

mundane life, something which no one knows or has except he who has also the Lord Christ. We can and needs must testify of Christ, so that from man to man not only the news but the possession also of this salvation, faith in Jesus and faith in the redemption, shall be transmitted. And where we testify of Him by word or example there He Himself works upon those who see and hear it, and attests to them His Word, and thereby Himself. This is the wondrous presence which belongs to Him and to no one else, a presence in which He proves Himself completely for all that He is—an entirely different reality from what we should have if He were only to give us miracles or the signs of what He is and wills. He does no sign, but attests and proves Himself as Lord, as Redeemer. He pardons; this is His true work, His real work, as a Savior. On this account, when He expects us to deny ourselves and to suffer and bear what the course of the world enjoins us to sacrifice, suffer, and bear, we can do it. Jesus never promised to make an end to this before the end of all comes. He has only said, and thus far in every case has kept His word: "And every one that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for My name's sake, and for the Gospel's sake, shall receive a hundredfold now in this time with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting." We can be without the miracles, the less, the merely temporal sign, since we have the greater—namely, the presence of the Lord Himself, of our Redeemer, if we only wish to know Him. To that great day which impends over us we can forego the miracles and can suffer, hard as

it often may be for us, even as Paul did forego, tho it was hard for him, when the Lord, at his three times reiterated prayer for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, gave only the answer (Paul would have afterward said, the glorious answer): "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My power is made perfect in weakness."

On the other hand, the Lord promised to His disciples: "He that believeth in Me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father." This word, too, is fulfilled, and is daily fulfilled. The greater works are not works as the Pharisees and Sadducees meant them, who, dissatisfied with all which Jesus had thus far done, asked a sign from heaven, which Jesus denied unto them. The greater works are the appropriation of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and thereby of power and strength from above, and for the higher life, which we need, and the communication of the Spirit to those who hear the Word and wish to believe. For men are to learn to believe through men, receive mercy, obtain the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins; they are, indeed, to receive forgiveness through men, which shall hold good in heaven. Whoever receives the spirit of faith, or has learned by the Spirit to believe in his own redemption, has received here below the greatest thing possible to be received by men. Yet, tho Paul's word has said to him, "Ye, too, were bought with a price," or Luther has repeated to him that which, as is reported, the friar had said to him, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," or some living brother has said,

“Thy sins are forgiven ; fear not, only believe !”
—such grace, such communication of salvation, and
therewith of the powers of the world to come, no one
has received if it should be established that Jesus has
not completed His work.

XI

THE WORK OF JESUS; OR, HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH, HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

EVEN the miracles did not make Jesus known by them as the Messiah whom God sent as the Son of God. Individuals, as one of the ten lepers, might return and give God the honor; the total impression, the real success was everywhere only a fleeting one, a passing surprise at the mighty man, an ephemeral fascination for the great deed of God which happened through Him. So the wondering thousands who crowded upon Him to hear the Word of God afterward went their way. They either forgot the Word of the Kingdom, their greatest hopes and their greatest good, or they received it with joy till the time of temptation, when they fell away, or they wished to combine both Kingdom of Heaven and kingdom of the earth, everlasting and temporal good, care for the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and care for the earthly interests, and the Word was choked in them. Jesus felt himself obliged to speak in parables of the Kingdom of Heaven and its form in this world and time, because this form which it took and had to take on account of Israel's unbelief was with difficulty perceived even by the disciples themselves, but could not be perceived at all by unbelievers. The opposition to Jesus became greater and greater—so great that even the faith of the disciples

would seem to have been endangered by it. When, therefore, the time came that was to bring all things to a crisis, and Jesus had set His face steadfastly to go for the Last Supper from Galilee to Jerusalem by the way of Samaria, while in the neighborhood of the city of Cæsarea Philippi He asked His disciples: "Who do men say that I (or the Son of Man) am?" Jesus knew that they did not acknowledge Him as the Messiah, the Son of God; that they denied to Him the predicate, "Son of God." Knowing this, He put the question, in considering which it makes naturally no difference whether He said: "What am I?" or "What is the Son of Man?" The disciples were to make up their minds upon what the people say and think of Him. They must know and recognize Him as something more than this judgment of the populace. It was now to be made clear whether they had enough courage and faith and firmness to abide by that which they themselves have known. None, say the disciples, knows and confesses the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus is something great, greater than all men whom God ever raised up in Israel: one of the ancient prophets; one who, after many, many years, had returned not from the grave—this no one could do any longer—but from the realm of death; a *revenant*, therefore he also can do such signs. Now Jesus asks: "But who say ye that I am?" The question is, whether the disciples, in the face of this semi-acknowledgment and yet complete refusal, will abide by that which they have known. They are, forsooth, children of their people; will they endure to realize themselves in opposition to all their brethren? Then Peter answers for all of them:

“Thou art Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God ! Thou art the Son of Man, who should be nothing more than any other, a man born of men, to whose Messiahship every one objects ! Thou art, nevertheless, the Messiah ; Thou art truly the Son of God.” And what is signified and included in this fact that the Messiah is the Son of God is only to be said and to be known in the light of the reality itself.

Thus Peter expressed his confession and that of his codisciples over against the refusal of the whole people. Jesus replies that this knowledge and confession is the foundation-rock upon which He will build His Church. He will gather around Him the people of God, the people of the future, no more the whole seed of Abraham after the flesh, which has refused this acknowledgment, but the people who confess His name and retain Him over against the whole people as the Messiah. With this confession to Him who is the foundation-stone Peter and his codisciples are fellow factors of this foundation which shall bear up the entire building of the congregation of God, a foundation of the temple of God, which also the gates of Hades, which devours and retains everything, shall not overcome. But in order to gather together this congregation, something in particular will and must take place. And so Jesus commences now to tell His disciples—clearly, distinctly, unmistakably—what is to come. *The Messiah must die*—God’s Son must go into death ! “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days He shall rise again.” He is the Messiah and

shall remain the Messiah ; the Son of Man is the Son of God ; nothing and no one can change anything as to that. There is to be a Messianic congregation, such as Israel should be and is not ; He will build and He will also protect it against the realm of the dead, into which otherwise everything sinks, and He will thus prove that He is really the Messiah. But His way goes into death and through death. Thus, and only thus, can He be the Messiah.

The disciples could not understand this, and Peter commenced to rebuke Him. But Jesus was so serious with His word and with His will to be faithful to His calling, He felt so deeply the necessity of being the Messiah at any rate and at all cost—yes, at the price of life—that He turned on Peter as if he was the Satanic tempter himself, and said : “Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.” It is irrevocable that the Savior whom God has given to the world to be the everlasting King of His Kingdom, must go through death as if He were no King at all. Not as if He were no more King—for none has acknowledged Him—but as if He never had been a King ! It must come to this: that it looks as if He were rejected by God, as if God had drawn away His hand from Him. But He shall receive again His life, He shall rise again ; He is, nevertheless, the Messiah—thus, indeed, does He only become the Messiah. That He died—precisely this belongs to His calling.

What Jesus had thus far indicated to His disciples and spoken publicly only as in a figure He henceforth expresses repeatedly and openly. From the beginning He accepted the necessity of His death,

and has never been obliged to exchange at any time the illusion of a victorious Messiah quickly gaining the people for the picture of a dying Messiah, for whom He then only recovered the traits of Messiah by His reference to the resurrection. There is no surer way to death than to become a helper, a savior of sinners, a savior in the name of God and after God's will. Jesus inspects the grounds of the people's opinion, which His disciples report to Him. The meaning of this general lack of understanding for His calling which exists to this day Jesus understands. That which the voice of the people denies to Him the Father allows to fall to His lot. It is God who glorifies and professes Him, saying to the disciples present on the mount of transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." And this declaration assures Him and His disciples that this reality remains. But this also remains: He must go into death! Jesus says a second time to His disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be set at naught, as it is written." He refers them to the Scripture and to the fate of all servants of God, to John the Baptist, the second Elijah, unto whom men did what they wished. From this shall follow that which awaits Him: "The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and when He is killed, after three days He shall rise again." Once more, therefore, He is the Messiah, and remains the Messiah; but He must go into death without contradiction, and only then will He be able to prove that He is not merely the Messiah.

The disciples understood not what He meant. They

heard the words, they sensed what He said, but they did not apprehend it. Does He speak figuratively? What does He mean when He speaks of death and resurrection? They were afraid to ask Him. That He could mean literally what He said they regarded as entirely precluded. He repeated the announcement of the suffering a third time, and spoke more in detail: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify; and the third day He shall be raised up." Consider now what that means. The high priests and scribes, the chief men, the authorities, the leaders of God's people, will condemn Him, and the Gentiles shall be enabled through them to mock Him and to kill Him; and only thus, *actually thus*, is He to be the Messiah, and so is to come again and prove it! Could an Israelite believe this? No! The answer is found in the request of the sons of Zebedee, through their mother Salome, that He might grant them to sit on His right and on His left in His glory. The other disciples are indignant at this request of James and John, who lay in Jesus' bosom, and later became the first and the last martyrs respectively of the twelve, and at the prerogative which these desired. They are reminded by Jesus that the Son of Man, the Messiah, whom no one will acknowledge, had not come to seek ministry and honor, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. This too they did not understand. How should that be possible? Jesus goes clearly and consciously on His way to death. He

enters into Jerusalem exactly according to the prophecy of Zechariah and Isaiah. No one suspects this, no one understands Him. They understand, indeed, that He speaks very seriously with the people, but they did not know that with this and with the deed at the tomb of Lazarus He has brought to maturity the decision of the leaders to kill Him. When, in consequence of the resuscitation of Lazarus, all people came unto Him, the Sanhedrin asks no more what it means. At the proposal of Caiaphas they rather decide to kill Him, for—thus old Caiaphas confirms his proposal—“it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” Thus God compels the high priest to do unwillingly that which belongs to his priestly office and to give expression to the will of God, even while he allows only the hatred of his heart to speak.

Jesus celebrates with His disciples, who understand nothing yet, the Passover feast, the redemption-meal of the Old Testament in remembrance of the past deliverance from Egypt, and now of the greater deliverance through the Messiah guaranteed thereby and ever since desired. “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,” saith Jesus. It is the last Passover of the Old Covenant. Now it can guarantee nothing more, and has nothing more to prophesy, for the redemption itself is now accomplished. Jesus then institutes for His disciples a redemption-meal, the Lord’s evening-meal, with bread and wine—the Lord’s Supper, as we call it—and says: “This is My body, My blood, given for you and poured out for you for the remission of sins.” Did

they understand it? Certainly not. They anticipate that *something* is coming, the fulfilment of all their hopes, but they think it quite otherwise than as it in fact occurred. Therefore they commence right away to contend again as to who among them is the greatest in the Kingdom of God. And this almost in the same moment in which Jesus had just said unto them: "One of you shall betray me!" Frightened, they ask: "Is it I, Lord?" Jesus advises them, confirms their hope in the Kingdom of God, and says to Peter the severe words: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not!" But neither he nor the other disciples listen to it. Jesus declares unto them: "All ye shall be offended in Me this night and give up the faith." None believes His affirmation. He says to Peter: "Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter answers: "I am ready to go to prison with Thee and to die with Thee"; for he thinks not that Jesus can be imprisoned and be led to death, and he is therefore ready to defy the whole world, since it can not possibly triumph.

But Jesus' fate now begins to be fulfilled. With His disciples He goes into the garden called Gethsemane, whither He had been wont at other times to go to pray. By prayer He will prepare Himself for that which He clearly sees before Him. Three disciples, Peter and James and John, who were the nearest to Him, He takes with Him, that they may watch and pray with Him. They anticipate nothing yet. But it is hard to bear what is to come: that His own

people, the people of promise, should kill Him, the promised One, the first-born brother—who can conceive it? Is Israel now to add that sin to all its sins, and to its unbelief? Has the measure of sins become so full that nothing more is left except for Him to suffer and to drink the cup which men offer to Him? Has the Father irrevocably decided that He must drink it? Can He not hinder this outbreak of sin? Jesus is ready to submit unreservedly to the Father's will, but must it come to pass that His brothers are to bring Him, their brother, to death? Is there no other way of salvation? God has, indeed, power over everything—can He not prevent that Jesus shall suffer this and die? Yes, He has the power, He can hinder it, but only through judgment. Then every mouth must grow dumb which opens against Jesus, each hand wither which is extended against Him; but where remains, then, the forgiveness and the mercy? Then the end of Israel, the end of the world, the great judgment-day of God will have come. No! by this suffering alone can there come grace, forgiveness, and deliverance. He must suffer, He must go through this depth, in order that, with this sin, all other sins may not be imputed to the people. He must fight alone this struggle, for His most intimate disciples are not able even to look upon Jesus' struggle of the soul, still less to watch with Him, were it only for one hour. To the end Jesus remains true to His calling, to be the Savior who saves His people from all their sins. He says not: "Father, it is too hard; I can bear no more!" He received the strengthening which He needed in order to be able to die, as having no will of His own;

and yet with a will obedient to the will of the Father, He rose up from prayer, and said to His disciples : " Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going : behold he is at hand that betrayeth me." And thus He went to meet death, the death of the cross—at once a device for inflicting capital punishment, a pillory, and an instrument of torture.

The traitor comes, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, sent by the chief priests and elders of Israel. Judas, acting as if he were the truest friend of Jesus, salutes and kisses Him. But Jesus can not be deceived. By virtue of His calling, He needed not to ask any one, for He Himself knew what was in man, and already long ago, yes, from the very beginning, He had seen through Judas. But He had borne with him, and had shown him all love—the greatest love which a man can experience. Even at the Last Supper Jesus had said to Judas : " That thou doest, do quickly "—thus giving him a sign that He knew him, in order that he might repent yet in the last hour if he so desired. Judas had not repented, but went out, night about him and night in him. With pain Jesus had remembered him, the lost child in His high priestly prayer; had spoken of the lost child with sorrow to the disciples when He said : " Good were it for that man if he had not been born." Now as he comes as leader of an armed multitude, Judas must hear that he can not deceive Jesus. For years Judas had never applied to himself the word concerning the one disciple who is a devil. Now he is to know why Jesus has suffered him so long. " Judas, betrayest thou

the Son of Man with a kiss?" The servants come upon Jesus to seize Him. "Whom seek ye?" Jesus asked them; and when they say, "Jesus of Nazareth," He saith, "I am He," and the power of this word shows to them the power of this Nazarene, who as a Nazarene, as they thought, could on no account be the Messiah. He throws them to the ground as a sign that, if He is not willing, the whole world can do nothing against Him. As with this multitude, so all armies sent out against Him would fall to the ground. But will he exercise this power? No! "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," says Jesus, and gives Himself voluntarily into the hands of His enemies. For He would rather die than destroy even one of them. Peter, who had drawn the sword—perhaps to make good his word—had already been reprov'd; the wound inflicted by him had been healed, and he had been told: "Thinkest thou that I can not beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" which prophesied of the redemption and whose word is authoritative even for the fate of the Messiah. In them we read not merely, "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities," but they also speak of the suffering of all servants of God, and therefore also of the suffering of the servant of God whose office it is to suffer and to die, that the world perish not—as it is written: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniqui-

ties: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

The way leads now to the Sanhedrin, the highest tribunal of the Jews, which at this time had only to judge particulars in religious matters and questions. Jesus does not defend Himself, for every defense were opposition to the fate that threatened Him, and, if successful, would lead only to the condemnation of His people and thereby of the world. On this account He neither answers the former high priest Annas, who had no right at all to question Him, nor does He defend Himself against the false witnesses who were hired to testify against Him, and who, notwithstanding, could not bring a unanimous testimony against Him. But when the officiating high priest Caiaphas adjures Him officially, so that everything—affirmation, negation, silence—is an oath, and when the question which is destined to bring about His death is thus formulated: "Art thou the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed, the Son of Jehovah?" Jesus can no more keep silence. Now He gives the answer for which He is ready to die, and for which His death is to atone according to the intention of His judges, but which His death shall confirm, according to His own intention and the Father's counsel; it is the answer by which He confirms with an oath before the face of the judging God, and in view of eternity—*that He is the Messiah*, and that they all (His judges and all who now reject Him) shall see Him sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. For no other reason, therefore, would He have to die—this Jesus' answer states—than because

He claims to be and is the Messiah. To this He swears, for this He receives His sentence. There is still time for His judges to see what wrong they are about to do. But high priests and elders, chosen for the very purpose of seeing to it that the people do not forfeit their future, and that they should experience the salvation of God, put themselves into the most complete opposition imaginable to their official duty, and condemn Him who, if Divine right were to decide, was alone worthy of life among a whole people deserving of death, and who alone was able to save the life of sinners. The earthly high priest condemns the eternal high priest; this is the result of the history of a people which existed only for this eternal high priest, the Messiah chosen by God. The history of men, among whom nominally and finally reason always dominates, never brings it to truth and salvation, but to something quite the contrary. Here reason was only on the side of God and Jesus; the world passed its sentence against them. Does it not do the same to-day, think you?

Disgrace and mockery follow the sentence of death, and the merciless brutality of the judges and the guard, the hatred intensified through their consciousness of the greatness of their offense, outrages the Holy One of God. Mockingly the soldiers ask Jesus to prove Himself a prophet by telling the names of His tormentors. Jesus, however, mentioned no names; no one should ever think that He could not forgive and forget, and every one who afterward might think of the incident would be able to say: "He knew me, indeed, but mentioned not my name, and would not

mention it out of pure mercy!" Jesus has another trouble resting heavily on His heart. Peter's fall has in the meantime taken place, as Jesus predicted it. He does what He is still able to do to save him now from everlasting perdition. It is, indeed, only a look of sorrow, of severity, and of love which He fixes upon him. But it is sufficient to fill Peter with the deepest sadness.

The verdict is given: "He is worthy of death." We do not recoil with terror here as from a tumultuary proceeding, like that which occurred at the stoning of Stephen. It is the cold hatred that we feel which does not lack in decorum because of its intensity. Everything must take place regularly to show how fully considerate and convinced of duty and right were those by whom Jesus was condemned and led to death. The representative of Rome alone can effect the judgment or arrange the execution. Every semblance of haste, hatred, and zeal is avoided. Pilate, however, needs not to confirm the sentence—indeed, he dares not do it. He must prohibit the execution, the performance, for he knows what is right, and is the arbitrator of justice in a subject country. He sees through the tricks which led to death, and he will not confirm the sentence. No; but neither will he prohibit the execution, because he is afraid—he, a Roman judge, who should fear nothing and nobody except to do wrong. But he is afraid, and tries to remove the decision from himself and leave it to Herod. Meanwhile, Herod finds no guilt in Jesus, and will neither interfere with the right of the Roman judge nor take away from him his duty. A conversation

with Jesus makes it clear to Pilate that neither right nor law authorizes him, still less obliges him, to deliver Jesus to death. Even the pretext that Jesus intended to make Himself king fails to impress the man of sovereign power and energy who would suppress every such effort without scruple, but who can find nothing in Jesus by which he can verify such accusation. On the contrary, the Kingdom whose King the man before him professes Himself to be is just as innocuous as the fruitless seeking after truth, which this educated Roman had given up long ago. Indeed, this accusation against Jesus serves him, on the other hand, harshly and mockingly to throw his rope around the accusers. He forces them to bind themselves unreservedly to the Roman emperor and to forego all their Messianic hope. "We have no king but Cæsar!" expresses their decision.

Pilate was obliged to confirm his opinion that he finds not the least guilt in Jesus, and that there is nothing against Him except this: that He means to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the friend and helper of publicans and sinners, who intends anything rather than the overthrow of all existing conditions. The Jews say: "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die." For this Pilate cares nothing. But Him whom neither God's Word and law, nor the grace ruling Israel for ages, have protected, the independence of the Roman judge, the real man in power in the Jewish land, does not now protect. Not a legal error, but fear of men and a courting of the favor of men bring about this, the greatest infringement of justice which ever happened, for by it Divine and human

right were trampled under feet. By a dream God warns Pilate ; this does not help a man who, perhaps, cared the more for such things because he cared nothing for the truth. Only the earthly realities impose upon this realist. When he had yielded already so far that, granting the customary release of a prisoner at the Easter time, he had left to the people the choice between Jesus (whom, as he said, they regarded as the Messiah—a sign how little he thought of the Messianic hope) and a murderer, taken in an insurrection, then he had indeed committed himself. Israel stood fast by its hatred. The priests went about and stirred the people to cry : “ Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas ! Crucify, crucify Jesus ! His blood be on us and on our children ! ” Pilate lacked the courage to step back, altho he had sufficient power to do so. “ If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar’s friend. ” This word had its effect. Jesus stood before him as a man given up on all sides, as a rebel, and in the face of the repeated outcry which demanded the crucifixion it cost him now no special compunction to pronounce the sentence of death and to order its execution. Pilate, besides Jesus the only representative of right still remaining, is now obliged to disgrace the solemn form of the sentence of the judge, set in power to preserve the right, and to wash his hands (as he is constrained to say, in innocence), and thereby make up the measure of the lie.

Jews and Gentiles arrive at the same end. Those do not wish for the truth which testifies against us all and yet alone can save us, these do not care for it. If ever a wrong which cried to Heaven was done

clearly and undoubtedly, it was here. If ever a sentence was a lie, it was this. Jesus, however, bears it in silence. He is silent, God Himself is silent; nothing and nobody speaks for Him against whom all have conspired, whom God and the world forsook and gave up. "All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, He opened not His mouth." Or should now take place the only thing upon which one could yet depend—the judgment? For "God speaks not, but He judges," say our people. But God's hand did not stretch out from the clouds. It was God's counsel that Jesus should empty the cup of unrighteousness and death to the last drop, that judgment may not intervene.

The sentence must be quickly executed; this religion demands, which has now completely sunk down to the pale "semblance of a godly nature." It is the Passover. The Jews can not become ceremonially unclean, and they would like to celebrate the Passover in remembrance of the past and promised deliverance. The *servile, supremum, crudelissimum teterrimumque supplicium*, appointed for outlawed slaves, highway robbers, counterfeiters, seditious persons, those guilty of high treason, the most cruel and most disgraceful sentence of death by the cross, was demanded for Him and decreed for Him. For a sign that He was esteemed nothing better than a common criminal, for whom there should be no more room on earth, He was, as the prophecy had predicted, reckoned with transgressors, and with two robbers He was led to the

place of execution, forced to carry His cross Himself, as He once had indicated to His disciples and to those who should become such. Only when He sunk under the burden a free Israelite who just came along the way was forced to carry the cross for Him—a sign of what the chosen people of God had to expect from the world-power into whose hands they have irrevocably surrendered themselves with the rejection of the Messiah.

If the inconstancy of the multitude, that in its hatred of the truth has a heart for everything but for the goodness and severity of God, has brought about the sentence of death, now the Lord meets, in the weeping women who stand by the way and bewail Him, with that undecided sentimentality which is full of the tears of feeling but not of penitence, and which delights in the horrible. It became an occasion for Jesus to reveal to Jerusalem the future, not so much by threatening the incessantly impending judgment, but by expressing His grief over this judgment. For on the way to death Jesus thinks not of Himself, but of His people and His people's guilt.

The rude compassion of the executioner's servants offers to Him a stupefying drink at the place of execution, which Jesus, however, refuses, for the unconsciousness of stupefaction is not that surrender of the will in love through which He was to suffer according to the will of the Father, and was not the obedience which He would and needs must render. Even now, even there also, as He indeed hung on the cross, He would have been able to help Himself if He only wanted, and so could have triumphed over those who

mocked Him as the crucified One, the powerless, the Man forsaken of God, who had meant to be the Messiah. But no ; He wished to feel the pain and distress and mockery which went to His soul, and suffer and endure it with a full, clear consciousness. No one, however, understood the mystery of His weakness.

In full perception of the wrong which was done to Him, and in the new pain of His wounds, He gives expression at the very beginning of His sufferings on the cross to that which His soul desires for the world which did this to Him. Or shall we, with Bernhard Weiss, regard the seven words on the cross as a fiction of the evangelists, sincerely conceived and actually felt to be true, which no language of Jesus had really warranted? But the reasons which he assigns for it contain such little proof and are so purely "reasonable" that only a critique which is at a loss for reasons can acknowledge them. For whence does Weiss know that, as in our time, so then also "the place had been shut off by the executioners," and that "no one of His adherents among the multitude, to which every access had to be refused, could by any means have been an ear-witness of the outbreathed prayer which came from His lips" ? What does it mean when it is said that that "which took place in the soul of Jesus amidst these tortures can, upon the whole, hardly be put into words," and that it "certainly was not the method of Jesus, who had enjoined upon His followers that they should pray in the inner chamber, to show to His executioners that in praying to His Father He has now overcome the severest trial, and that not

His own fate filled His soul, but the merciful love which seeks and saves that which is lost"? A criticism which operates with such arguments, and from its own consciousness constructs what took place in the soul of Jesus in order to interpret the words of Jesus as unhistorical, and at the same time to give to the feelings of the believing congregation a certain satisfaction, condemns itself. We can simply let it alone.

Jesus remembers the world which brought Him to the cross and those who have now crucified Him, but not in anger, not, moreover, in weak, affectionate compassion, but in love, in a love without comparison, in mercy, which intercedes for mercy on those who deserve it not. He prays for them with a word which comprehends their guilt and the excuse for it, to implore pardon for them and the forgiveness of their sins. For He would rather suffer, suffer everything, than that this sin, and thereby all sin, should be imputed to the world. So deeply has He penetrated and comprehended the power with which sin binds men, notwithstanding His profound severity and their disregard for His testimony to the truth, He nevertheless has an excuse for them, tho they have none for themselves. Their very ignorance is sin: the sin of the people, the sin of its chiefs—they were all traitors and murderers of the Holy and Just One—and the sin of the soldiers, whose action was also only an emanation from their heathenism, and thus of their sins, altho they knew it not. "Now, brethren," says Peter afterward to his people, "I wot that in ignorance ye did it"; and Paul writes concerning the

chief offenders, that they had not known the secret hidden wisdom of God, for if they had known it, they "would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But it was sin, great sin, and it put upon them a guilt which they could not bear, just as afterward, in reference to his persecution of the congregation, Saul could say that he did it in ignorance, but nevertheless, because he did it, calls himself a chief among sinners. With His words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," the crucified One, immediately He is crucified, interposes that this greatest of all capital crimes be not visited upon the race and the judgment not take place which, according to Divine right and moral necessity, ought now to come upon the world. For thus was the radical contrast now exposed: On the one side, the side of Jesus, there was right, not only the right which the sinner also has when he suffers wrong, but right absolute, nothing but right, the highest, the everlasting *right*. On the other side, however, the people's side, and we can say it of the whole world now as well as then, there was and is nothing but wrong; for over against Jesus we are all nothing but wrong, and it avails nothing to turn away from such a confession for the sake of the pretended scientific method and so-called objectivity of the inquiry. The inquiry can be conducted satisfactorily, the real importance of Christ can be known and acknowledged, only by throwing into the scale our own share in the matter. But so great and terrible was and is this wrong that only a step remains into the horrid, bottomless depth of eternal sin and eternal perdition—the sin of rejecting

this love with which the crucified has obtained and effected for us not only respite but mercy. That sin, however, to preserve the world from which was the desire of Jesus, could and can only be committed after the mystery of His suffering has become manifest.

After Jesus has acknowledged us fully with this prayer and put himself wholly on our side, one person only has the courage to profess Him, and he is incited to it through his misery. This one, however, is an outcast of our race, one of the robbers who were crucified with Him. The representatives of godliness, authority, and law, and the other thief, who had trampled the law under foot, unite to mock the crucified Jesus, whose weakness they regard as being at last unmasked, and think not what it means. Even now Jesus could have helped Himself, but—at the price of a lost world. This nobody divines. Then one of the malefactors bears witness to Him, testifies of His innocence, and acknowledges His Messiahship. Whence does he know both? He knows the world; he knows how cold-bloodedly it can do wrong, and how it does it a thousand times; no one knows it better than one whom it rightly judges. He knows men, and believes and trusts them once more, and thinks them all invariably like himself, tho in their deeds they may still be different. But Jesus who, in this moment, has not cursed the world and His murderers, but prayed for them—Jesus is not like them. In such a distress as that in which the malefactor is, who receives the due reward of his deeds, Jesus alone can help; He is the Messiah, and the malefactor is convinced that Jesus will yet some day be manifest in glory. In Him alone

he believes, and he ventures the petition for a merciful remembering on the day of the future when He shall come with His Kingdom. He is wholly unconcerned as to whether any of the scribes will blame him for that. No one had any compassion for him anyhow, and he desired none. Jesus, however, exerts on him His Savior-love above all that he asked or thought, forgives him all his sins and all his guilt, pardons him, and promises him that on that very day when they both were suffering they should taste the blessedness and glory of restored innocence in the paradise of God. He is the Savior, the deliverer and pitier of those who are lost and perish. 'This He will be and continue to be also in death—yes, in the very hour of death. Or, should this word of the dying Jesus have been invented, be an “ingenious, deeply felt” fiction which is yet truth, *who had ventured to think it out?*

While Jesus exercises His indestructible seigniorial right in unfathomable mercy, the servants disposed of the only thing which He possessed in this world—His clothes, and cast lots for His coat. Tho still alive, He is treated like one dead. He was, indeed, irrevocably lost; and thus they fulfil, without having an idea of what they do, in terrible literalness, what the Scripture says of the suffering of a servant of God persecuted and smitten like Jesus. This Scripture has deemed it worthy to record such a suffering of a servant of God who, tho living, is treated as dead, and who must look helplessly upon that which is done with His belongings.

To be sure, as to the life which He has hitherto

lived, it is now over. This He attests Himself by giving John to his mother as a son, and his mother to John, to whom John was to render a son's duty and a son's love. For His cross establishes a new communion which reaches far beyond the bond of blood that otherwise keeps men together. To this day it indeed remains that those who find themselves under the cross of their Lord and Savior, as those who live through Him and through Him only, by their common sentiment belong together forever in a sense in which brothers and sisters can not at all belong together.

The world has cast Him out, the Father hid His face from Him, and left Him in the hands of His enemies. He experiences what it means to belong to a world from which, with its sin, the Father must turn away His face. This is the suffering of His soul, which He must bear on account of a world that He loves and that He would save from the angry judgment of God. The world has nothing left for Him but hatred, and treats Him as it pleases. The disciples have given Him up in despair, and have become puzzled and baffled; this is their sin and His greatest sorrow. God, however, hides His face before all this sin and the world which commits it, for His eyes are so pure that He can not see evil. He hides His face from Jesus also, who belongs and will belong to this world, who will not break loose nor be released from it, and must therefore bear with it whatever it deserves. He experiences what this means when sin has reached its climax and God now withdraws His hand. The face of God, hidden from the sin of the

world, is now also hidden from Jesus ; Jesus is forsaken of God. Is this truth ? Can one say this ? Yes, for Jesus Himself attests it. It is truth and reality. He is forsaken of God but He forsakes not God, therefore is His sorrow so great. He who can not give up the world can as little give up the Father. Thus Jesus tastes and empties the whole cup of suffering to the dregs as never a man before has so drunk it. What is otherwise the misery of the lost, that which is suffered by them with inmost revolt, He bears, and yet remains true at once to the world and the Father. This forces to His lips the words of the twenty-second Psalm, which so truly became a Psalm of His suffering : " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " It is not as if He despaired of God and God's government and rule, not as if He could not bear more than He now has to bear ; He bears it indeed. He knows that it is God's government and rule which put this suffering upon Him. He knows that His prayer in Gethsemane is heard by the Father, altho He could not grant it. Now He prays as one whom even this suffering of His deeply distressed soul, even this complete separation from God, can not induce to discard God, to do as of old Job's wife advised her husband : " Bless God and die ! " Thou art, nevertheless, my God !—to this He adheres. He knows the answer to such lamentation, and the confidence with which the singer of the twenty-second Psalm closes is also His confidence, and He will die in it. For the time being, however, He must struggle in order to hold fast the confidence of His faith. That He is forsaken of God is a fact. The question of

Jesus seeks the answer, and is the prayer of One who has no one else but just this Father to whom He can commend Himself and His cause, and on whom He must wait till He speaks or acts.

Elsewhere even rudeness keeps quiet when it meets one marked with Cain's sign. Here at the sight of the crucified Jesus it keeps not quiet. It mocks Him who moans, of whose agony it has no idea, and speaks as if Jesus had turned away from God, had surrendered Himself and His Messiah-consciousness, and only adhered to it so far as to summon the prophet Elijah to be His helper in need. Yes, they deride their own Messiah-faith, according to which Elijah was to come before the Messiah to settle all disputes and restore peace in Israel. Jesus, however, through the suffering of the cross, despaired neither of Himself nor of His Father. On the contrary, He knows that the Scripture is now fulfilled and the salvation-counsel of God has arrived at its goal. Unconfounded, He yet humbles Himself so far as to ask these men who guard His cross and heartlessly look at His suffering for a refreshing drink; He leaves it, however, to them to decide if they shall listen to His cry, "I thirst!" He receives the refreshment, not, however, from compassion, but from mockery. Now, however, He attests with a loud voice that which His soul did desire, and for what He lived His whole life. The counsel of God, the Word of Scripture, the work of God, the work of redemption, it is finished! His task is done, for in His death the judgment is averted from His people and the world. Now He commends Himself to the Father, to the God, who resolved and promised

the redemption and sent the Redeemer. He gives up His soul thereby to free many from judgment and destruction. His blood, the blood of the Son of God, is shed for many, for all, for He died that they might be spared and forgiven. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses."

Darkness already for hours had covered the whole country, altho it was bright day, and the sun and the moon stood in the heavens, as it shall happen once again, according to the prophecy of Joel, when God comes for judgment. Jesus gave up the ghost, and the earth did quake, the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened, as if the last day, the resurrection-day of all the dead had come. But it was only the latest or the last day of the Old Covenant. Instead of judging and destroying the world, as it deserved, God caused Jesus, His Son, to die, and reckoned not unto the world its sin.

Thus Jesus finished His work. Suffering was from the beginning His life, His way through this world, fallen into sin and death. His business was the setting forth of the Word, which was only received and accepted by few, and was again given up by these few in the hour of crisis. He had known how to speak a kindly word at the right time to the murderer, He had invited the weary and heavy laden to Himself in order to quicken them, and He had shown everywhere, and again and again, that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He wrought miracles, unmistakable signs, to show that at the proper time in the power of God He would change and transform

the whole world into a new world. But all this had been in vain. As soon as Israel's authority commenced to be against Him in earnest no mouth opened any more to bear witness to Him, to declare that "never man so spake as this man," and that He is the Messiah—a testimony which, born of their fear and terror, He would not accept from demons, which He had refused when a token of grateful and happy faith from the Samaritan woman. His day was over, night had come. Jesus could only suffer, do nothing but suffer unto death. This was the deepest depth of of His self-humiliation with which His advent into the world commenced. This by necessity implied that He, the eternal God, had bound Himself to men in space and time in order to carry them over into a happy eternity; He had to suffer death from men and for them—and what a death! He was able, with a word, nay, not even with a word, but actually *without* a word, with but a look of His eyes, with an emotion of His will, to hurl from Him and into the dust all His foes: the whole power of Israel and Rome, the great, yes, the greatest power of the world, and to triumph over all those who had laid hold on Him, whether with works or words or thoughts. But He did it not. His way was a straight way. He went from resignation to resignation, He suffered and died in our behalf.

This is the meaning of that momentous event which happened there in the corner in Judea—the greatest in the history of the world. Never before and nowhere else as long as the world has stood, and, aside from a short moment at the end of days, never again as long as the world shall stand, were or shall be contrasts so

clearly, so completely set over against each other. On the one side, a man who wholly and entirely lived for the object of God's great love, and wished nothing but to save men from that which ruins the highest and the humblest of their attainments, the best works of their art and the rudest monuments of their desire—from sin, and with sin death. This one was and is Jesus—Jesus, the eternal Savior. It is not His own holy life, not the complete realization of the moral ideal, not the indescribable and unfathomable fidelity and humility of His faith, nor the confidence of His trust in God, in which He stands before us and offers Himself to us, but it is His saving love. God Himself offers to us in this dying Jesus the saving hand.

Over against Him stands the multitude, the people of God, Israel as well as the Gentile world, all one in this: we will not that this Man reign over us. The disciples who once believed are intimidated and in despair. Jesus would help, but so great are sin and guilt that He can not help. Now we are lost! This was their thought. Jesus is not the Savior, and God can not have mercy! If ever a critical point existed in history it is now. Can God help, or can He only judge and punish? Why did He permit the dying of Jesus? Why has He not interfered? It was so entirely different from every ordinary situation. Much blood—an almost infinite outpour—has been unjustly shed since the blood of Abel, and the martyrs before and after Jesus have patiently suffered; but all was different, nevertheless, in the case of Jesus. Here was, as we said, all right and nothing but right on Jesus' part, the right which His calling gave Him to

love, to suffer, and to save, and the power, nevertheless, to be able to have it otherwise without wronging any one. Jesus could help Himself and judge the world, but did it not. The martyrs also could have helped themselves, but only through sin, only by denying the truth. When they denied not, but patiently suffered and died, not with a curse and an imprecation against their enemies on their lips and in their hearts, but with a supplication for them, it was for the good of their enemies, yet only in so far as God's patience still delayed judgment upon them till the last day. To interpose really, to suffer so that the others might not be judged, this neither they could do nor any one else of all those who must finally die as heirs of sinners and also for their own sin. For themselves and for their enemies they could only hope in a Redeemer and wait until He came. But Jesus—why had He to die? Why did God allow Him to die to whom He had professed Himself at His baptism and a few days afterward, and before His suffering, at the transfiguration? Was everything over now, every hope of men in a Savior and Redeemer cut off? Or did it need, perhaps, only the recollection of His word concerning the Kingdom and the love of God the Father for the infinite worth of a human soul and the practise of love, in order that we do not despair, but rather be strengthened by the courage of Jesus and by His fate, which has led Him into a higher, better, tho, to us, inconceivable existence? I fear that no one would be able to have the courage to believe for himself that which he must believe of Jesus! "Whither shall I flee because I am burdened with many and great sins?"

Whoever must pray thus is not helped by such reflections! And, further, to what end, then, was His dying necessary? Did the "must" in the words of Jesus spring only from human limitation or from a perception of Divine necessity? And if the latter was the case, what was this necessity? Was it such a necessity as we have shown—either His death, His dying, or our judgment, our destruction?

It is impossible really to be assured of God's grace, except in the thought of Jesus' blessed faith and accomplished life. We are lost if Jesus' death means merely a victory of evil, or merely the still greater victory of the only good One permitting Himself not to be alienated from His God, whom He serves, from the peace of God which is for Him a counter-weight to the sorrow of the world, and from the effort to pave a way for God among men—in which, as a matter of fact, he has failed. Jesus' dying must mean something far different, must mean what we already stated. But *whereby was this to be known?*

If ever the decisive judgment of God over the unrighteousness of the world, and all blood unrighteously shed in it, was to be expected, now was the time. According to all that one may see or hear of what He did and spoke, the only One from whom help could be expected for a world which had lapsed into sin and death had not fallen a victim to a judicial error or to a misunderstanding or a thoughtlessness, be it conceivable or inconceivable. He was a victim of conscious opposition to the Divine verdict, which He pronounced; to the Divine love, which He declared and practised; and to the Divine demand, which He made. He could

not and would not be a Messiah according to the people's will, and still less by grace of the people, but according to God's will and by the grace of God. He received not right and honor from the hands of men, but lived in His own right and in the Father's right. If Israel is that people which not only knew God's will, but in which also this will had become law ; if their whole history had so proceeded that this law ruled among them and brought blessing upon the people in case of obedience, and a curse in case of apostacy, then an entirely different judgment from any ever before known ought now to commence. This, moreover, Jesus had often enough promised, and with their smitten conscience the disciples expected nothing else even now. They thought of the last judgment. What Jesus had told them: that His mission is not all over with His death, that rather He will rise up again and return to them; this they had not at that time understood, and thought of it now still less, since the fact of His death and the triumph of His enemies pressed upon them. Jesus had aroused in them the greatest, most fervent, and the most joyous hopes ; now these hopes were all dead.

What the disciples had not remembered, the opponents, however, had not forgotten. Moved by fear for the otherwise so insignificant company of His adherents, they appointed keepers for the tomb, and sealed the stone to prevent a removal of the corpse and the possible tale that Jesus was risen. But in vain. The justice of God delayed not, but manifested itself in a wondrous manner. If Jesus was the Christ of God, then this must needs come to pass which at

all times had been the hope of the oppressed, and which in their hard, inward struggle they had never abandoned, which the Psalms testify and which the prophets had proclaimed as the final triumph of God's cause and of God's servants. A Divine crisis was unavoidable. The death of Jesus without any further results than His translation into an upper, better, peaceful world beyond the grave, was a giving up of the world to its sin and to death. That Jesus, being without sin, shall live on in a higher, better world is unquestioned. That is not to say, however, that this world is now opened also to them who would never be like Jesus. It speaks for the great historical faithfulness of our records that, according to them, not one of the disciples, after the death of Jesus, conceived the idea that He and they would continue to live after death. They waited for a Divine crisis—nay, they waited not; they knew, indeed, that everything was lost, and themselves also. They only waited to be lost. That this would be the decision was not doubtful to them. What Jesus had said of the day of His coming again from heaven—the only thing, perhaps, which partly, at least, still remained in their memory—gave them the less comfort, since on their part they had not executed the truth toward Him.

Then happened that which no eye has seen, which is nevertheless irrefragably true: Jesus was raised up from the dead; rose, through the glory of the Father, through the fulness of the power and love of God, in which He is to be all that He is for us—for our sake, for our welfare. Jesus returned into life, not to die again and then forever, but as One who He has always

been, the Messiah, now triumphant over death, and therefore no more to be touched by it. Now existed for Him no more any bounds, since He has overcome death; now He could actively assert for us His eternal Divine essence as our brother, for He belonged and belongs to us and has returned in order to be ours forever, to share everything with us, whose misery and distress and judgment He has taken upon Himself and has overcome. The resurrection was His justification. God attested it to Him and to His own, and attests it to all who experience that the living Jesus deals with them and, through the Holy Ghost, Himself pleads His cause with us, and shows us that He is really and forever the Messiah, the King, the Savior, and Helper.

To the women and disciples who came to the tomb the fact was made known through God's messengers, through angels, whose appearance legitimated them as messengers of God from the upper world, and whose words must needs be made known as words of truth through their agreement with that which Jesus has said and through their effect, in which judgment and mercy united again in a supermundane, God-wrought union. Nevertheless, the first effect was only fear and terror among those who first heard the message, as well as among those also to whom they communicated it. That the hour of crisis had come over the world was now a matter of course, and that it was not to bring, that it has not brought, destruction was inconceivable to them. That on account of this expectation the faithfulness of the report is attested to them shows how human they were, tho mistaken. Only the appearance of Jesus Himself loosened the ban

which rested on them, and confirmed to them His old, often repeated word, now, however, more wondrously and gloriously revealed than they ever had conceived, that He did not come to judge the world but to save it. Everything remained in the world as it was, sin and death ruled, and yet all was different. They, the disciples, all those who were conscious of the resurrection of Jesus, were redeemed. They rejoiced in the redemption, the pardon which had now fallen to their lot, and from now on they could wait in God's peace and with confidence for the redemption of their body, for the forthcoming liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Now it was clear to them that Jesus had no need at all to die if death could have no power over Him, that He could have been left to death only by the premeditated counsel and will of God, and that on this account His life, as also, according to this premeditated counsel and will, His death, should now be for our welfare. With His life the disciples had their own life again as those delivered from perdition. With His death the judgment over them, over the world, over us, had come to an end. He had died that we might not die and perish. This was the wondrous grace of God which now concerns the whole world. Death and what follows upon it was God's judgment; it weighed on the whole world as God's wrath, who refuses the salvation, not as a punishment measured after God's wisdom, equivalent to sin, but as the self-understood sequence for man, who would not lead the life that has been given to him by God in and according to God's will. God's wrath is, however,

the purpose which denies us salvation. This wrath weighs on us. "For we are consumed in Thine anger, and in Thy wrath are we troubled." And it did not yet weigh finally on us and our race, for God was moved with compassion that we should thus perish. On this account did He send His Son that He might belong to us, and we in Him might have God and everything that is God's. Therefore, the Son of God, the King of His Kingdom, had to die and still remain ours, as is made manifest in His resurrection. Here the whole gracious will of God was definitively executed. Christ's death was the sacrifice which Jesus offered, the ransom which He paid for our freedom. The Father, for our sakes, did not spare the Son; He made Him to be sin on our behalf, treated Him as if not His own Son but only sin was before Him, that we, whom God through this exchange has restored, might in Him become the righteousness of God. Christ's blood, the blood of the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. In Him we have indeed the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses; He is the sacrifice of the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who has made us free and bought us for His possession; He is the propitiation which God has represented to us and offers through faith in His blood. The apostles never tire of reiterating in new terms the great fact which constitutes here our thesis. It is the fact on which from the beginning and in eternity the covenant of God's grace rests, and which, moreover, stamped its special meaning upon the whole Old Testament cultus, in spite of its analogy with all other Divine service. What

the disciples now perceived, since they had again the crucified One, was the great importance of His cross: that on it all depended for them, that in it was completed everything that Christ is for us, and that this was the true goal, moving toward which He had become ours: "He was obedient even unto death—yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him." So it is said of the crucified One who rose again: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." The suffering and death of Christ, the crucified One, who rose again, have acquired for us the forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, communion with God. The patience and mercy of God, through which since Adam's fall men have life, and through which again and again the believers of the Old Covenant have received forgiveness, they are bound from the beginning to this Christ, who suffered, died, and rose again. Everything came to pass for the sake of the forgiveness of sins. Christ, the living Christ, who belongs to us and therefore is ours, who died, was crucified by the world, by us, *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world, and herein is love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Who, therefore, will overcome the world's sin and the world's sorrow can only *overcome through the blood of the Lamb.*

Thus was solved for the disciples the mystery of the history of Jesus, the most mysterious of all histories which have ever happened, and one which to-day no historian can pass by, unless for him all mysteries are

comprehended in the reign of reason over nature, so that he sees them solved by the "reason in history," but ignores the God in history. The expectations and hopes till then unfulfilled—they knew that—would now be fulfilled. A participant in glory through the path of His suffering, from glory He now shall act on the world and for the world. Now commences a new time of waiting, but different from the former waiting. Not as in the former manner did Jesus associate with His own, altho He ate and drank with them. But He needed not to do this. As one who had death behind him, who had overcome it, He now had as a practical proof of His Messiahship a completely unhampered and unlimited personality. He did not resume His former activity, He wandered no more about with His disciples to offer Himself to Israel, but confined His companionship first of all to those who believed in Him, that He might so endow them that they might learn to take into their hands the preaching of the Gospel about Him, and of the promise fulfilled in themselves. They were to vouch to the whole world that in Him, the crucified and risen Jesus, all the promises of God are, as Paul says, "yea and amen," that all who believe in Him should, as Peter says, have forgiveness of sins, and that He is the Messianic King, the peace-bringer of His people. For from man to man unto the ends of the earth should the news spread of Him, the victor over death, the Prince of Life, who has the keys of hell and death; from man to man the possession of grace and of our redemption through belief in Him should be propagated. This, indeed, was possible, and in this the disciples

whom He had chosen could now go forward; for where the name of Jesus is named there no more is made mention of one dead, of a man who once existed. Jesus Himself is present, and declares Himself, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to all who hear His testimony. They perceive the risen One, who waits only that the Gospel may be brought to the lost people, that in the course of our history He might also return to the lost people, to declare Himself and to transform the world. Therefore, those who believe in Him are lacking nothing as compared with those who saw Him with bodily eyes.

Forty days lasted the association of Jesus with the disciples, during which He spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, which was now in the world, altho the world was not yet a Kingdom of God, and still resisted becoming such. Whether these were precisely forty days, or whether this is the round expression for six weeks, is wholly unimportant. Corresponding to the duration of other times in the history of the people of God—to the forty days which Moses spent on Sinai, to the forty days which Elijah needed till he reached Horeb, the mountain of God—this time was spent by Jesus in intercourse with His disciples. He stands no more merely as one among them, but is declared the Savior of the world. On this account, also, He is no more a natural denizen of the earth, but appears from time to time, yet always, indeed, only to His own, who were to carry His name into all the world. But, then, the day comes when He goes from them, to be from thence with His Word wherever they proclaim it, to manifest Himself as God and Lord from heaven, and as a deliverer and Savior. He goes from them with

the commission to preach to every creature, in His name, repentance and forgiveness of sins, and to apply the forgiveness to men through baptism. This is now no more, as with John, a merely warranting symbol, but symbol and reality at the same time, washing away the guilt of sin. The congregation that begins with them continues, as we see in the choice of Barnabas and Paul, and is to continue it to the end ; and that which the congregation says and which is under its supervision, what the witnesses and ministers of the Gospel say and do to those who are likewise to enjoy the redemption, Christ Himself attests by His presence. On the harvest feast of Israel (the Pentecost) Christ sends His Spirit upon all His disciples, of whom one hundred and twenty were together at Jerusalem. With this commenced the gracious presence of God on earth : the Spirit is the first gift of the redemption, and warrants the future. In the power of this Spirit of the presence of God's grace and salvation upon earth the Gospel of Christ is now preached in the whole world, and in the power of this salvation-presence the congregation of the redeemed waits for the coming of Him who declares Himself to us, and confesses Him with joy : *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever !*

XII

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY



WE can now understand the meaning of what we said at the beginning of the lectures—that Christ appears in the New Testament not as subject but as object of religion, of our religion. Christianity is not the religion which Jesus Himself has taught, believed, practised, but is the religion which consists of a personal relation of the believer to Jesus, communion with Jesus, and as with Him so also communion with the Father. Not a Christianity of Christ but the Christhood of Christ is what the New Testament gives us. Christ is offered to the world in the apostolic preaching, Christ offers Himself in His own preaching. We are to believe in Christ, and in Him, moreover, as the crucified and risen Messiah, and we are to have peace with God, forgiveness of sins, strength for a godly life and conversation, and life eternal through our union with Him, through faith by believing in *Him*, not by appropriating to ourselves His thoughts, His knowledge, His faith. Christ is preached, and in His person, One who, instead of judging the world, rather Himself suffered and died, and thus suffered and died for the world that it might be spared from God's judgment. Christ is proclaimed whom God has raised up from death, and thus has justified; Christ who, through the mercy of God toward us, returned from a death which men

wreaked on Him, and thereby proved their whole ungodly and antigodly nature. Christ returned not to judge and to punish, but to forgive. To the whole world all its sins are forgiven, and shall be forgiven, because all sins of the world are connected with each other, and one produces the other, and finally meet in the one great sin of resistance to the Christ of God. Christ, the crucified and risen One, in Divine power sends out His disciples into all the world to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. Christ, the crucified and risen, who died and became alive again, who died the same death which we die, who was raised up from this death as we shall be raised, now, however, becomes manifest as the Savior. He was and is God, and yet becomes and remains man, entirely man, wholly our brother. He will only have and use His deity as our brother. *He is the tenor of the Gospel.* This is Gospel, fulfilled promise—fulfilment nevertheless which, in accordance with the peculiarity of all prophecies, far surpasses in brightness the promise itself, as the prophecy of His suffering remains far behind the reality.

It is well that Harnack has said, in a sentence so clear, so definite, so simple that the statement could not be bettered, that "Christ does not belong to the gospel"—*i.e.*, the gospel according to Harnack, for the Gospel of Jesus reconstructed by him differs most distinctly and most completely from the Gospel of the New Testament. The New Testament knows no other Gospel than that whose tenor is Christ, and it matters not whether Christ or the apostles proclaim it. Between these alternatives we must make our de-

cision. The position of the whole New Testament is simple: Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and in eternity the same! Christ not a man who *was*, but who became alive again, who now lives forever, not as we continue to live after death, and as the saints, the spirits of the righteous made perfect live, but who now lives as we shall some day live, only that He lives as our brother, the first-born from the dead, Savior and Lord over all. He lives and shall live, reigns and shall reign, as King of kings and Lord of all lords.

With this Jesus who came to life again, a higher, supramundane power entered into the closed order of history, and commenced to interfere and shape it. History is no longer merely the story of that which men do with each other and against each other, of what they accomplish or do not accomplish. This is still, indeed, the main tenor of history, and the clearer and plainer historical inquiry knows how to show this and bring it to light, and describe its development from the beginning, the more will such inquiry in that direction fulfil its own purpose and serve to further this development. But we must not and shall not conceal from ourselves that all development strives for its goal and its end. What wisdom of this world can say what will be the end of development as it works in the hearts and heads of men—of thinkers and wise men, of poets and artists, of technologists and peasants! Yet this is known to one—the *Christian*! The end of all *is dust*! But in this development, surrounded and opposed by it and opposing it, since the Gospel is preached, a new power has entered—the Gospel that is *Christ*. Christ and the world;

this is, since then, the theme of all real history, and should be the aim of all real historiography. Not until our own time did the struggle to shape history to philosophical ends really commence. The times of rest, which come once and again, are always times for the collecting of new forces to carry on the fight against the Christ of God with new energy, be it under the mask of friendship with the Gospel, be it as an enemy with open visor. Christ attests Himself everywhere, but is only known and acknowledged by those who believe and confess His name. In and with His person He lives and works and sues, whose throne is the throne of God, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who, like the Holy One in Israel, "dwells in the high and holy place with Him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Or can He not, then, do this? But what is the meaning of this fear which falls upon us while old recollections awake? "Why do you visit me, ye pictures, which long ago I thought forgotten?" And the future stands before us dark and gruesome, and we have no more eye nor ear for anything else, performing our work mechanically, while again and again sounds on the ears the iteration: "You are lost! You are lost!" Is it disease, is it imagination, or is it reality? We know: this being lost is reality, terrible reality. We suffer under a misgiving of everlasting judgment, yet dare not show to any one our very troubled inner feeling, our state of apprehension. What is that! It is not yet experience of Christ. It is experience of the living

God, experience of His terrible severity. We know that there is a living God, we feel Him, it is truth.

But where this experience comes—it comes not to every one—it is only the first step of experience of Christ. This is quite different. We hear of Him, we perceive His Word, we know His deeds, His history—we hear *Him*! He stands living before our eyes, not as a recollection from childhood, but as One with whom we have to deal, man against man. It is not that He *was* one who concerns us, He *is* one—nearer than father and mother and brother and friend. Since He is risen He lives before us, for us, with us, as soon as the Word concerning Him comes to us and demands our faith, our acknowledgment of His truth. Each declaration of His Word, or of God's Word, is at the same time an attestation of His person. He speaks not merely everlastingly binding words about God, about the Father, about the Kingdom of God, about the infinite worth of our soul, about loving and ministering; His words have rather a very peculiar power and a special importance, because they are words of a living One who speaks with us. Yes, He speaks of God, but He connects the knowledge of God with the knowledge of His person; He speaks of the Father, but this is His Father, and we can become children of God only by believing in the Son. He speaks of the Kingdom of God, but in Him it is present, and only in Him have we the blessings of the Kingdom: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. He speaks of loving and ministering, but only through faith in Him who died for us, His enemies, do we learn to love, and can love and serve. Every-

thing that He says is connected with Him. He does not merely invite us to plunge into the *recollection* of Him, and thus through a vivid presentation of His person and the place and time, have an after-experience of what He meant when He said : " Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest " ; or, " Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out " ; or, " I am the light of the world, the bread of life, the good shepherd, the way, the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father but by Me; he that beholdeth Me beholdeth Him that sent Me." He lives, and His Word, which He once spoke, He still speaks to us to-day. Therefore, therefore only it still stands to-day; therefore *we* must decide either for or against Him; we must and shall not merely believe Him, but believe *in* Him. He is our Judge, and again He Himself is our Redeemer. Nothing humbles us so low and nothing revives us so certainly and gives us such peace as He, not merely with His words, but by His giving *Himself* to us. By having Him we have in Him, as Paul says, the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses. If we do not have Him neither do we have the forgiveness.

He is not like one of the great ones of our race, not even the greatest of the great; He is something different. Since He came, the fate of every one turns on Him, and the fate of the whole world will finally be decided by its relation to Him. He rouses all our antipathy, all our indignation, and He stills all our misery and all anxiety, and the unrest of our bad conscience, which rightly accuses us, yet which, however, He purges. As He lived and suffered by the

hands of men, so now He lives and suffers by our hands. Our sin, the sin of the world, which forms one great whole, He bore; our sins He forgave and forgives. He reconciled us with God, and obtained the forgiveness of God, and calls it into our heart, so that we have it in a reality exactly as actual as our sin and guilt, so that we may say, "This *is*—not this *was*—my sin, my guilt, but it is forgiven!"

This is what Paul calls the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—not the grace merely which He declares, but the grace which He administers. In this grace we have, at the same time, the Father, who adopted us as His children for Christ's sake. He is present to us with the Father in His spirit, the Holy Spirit, through whom He testifies to us that we are children of God, and who works in us the faith, and teaches us to pray in faith, so that we need never despair, but shall remain in God's peace even in persecution. He keeps us in faith, He helps us, so that we always have our joy in Him, and thus can overcome our sinful lust. We can finish the course, fight out the good fight, and keep the faith and exercise love, and adhere to our hope even unto the end—all because and when we hold fast to Christ. If we have Him whom the fathomless compassion of God has for us given into death and for us raised from the dead, we are born again to a living hope through this very mercy of God which gave Him back to us. Without Him, hopeless—this was our life! All our thinking and speaking and knowledge of the life after death, or of that which is more and, indeed, different from this—eternal life, of the glory of the new world—help us

just as little as the thoughts which we entertain of eternal life in spaceless and timeless existence, which now already we ought to have, and into which we should definitively pass as soon as we have died. All hope in a final, everlasting redemption, in attestation of the power and love of God which is to end all evil—all hopes were gone, lowered with Jesus into the grave in which He was interred. Now, however, all hopes have become alive again with Him—living, ever living, hopes: there is an everlasting, incorruptible, and undefiled inheritance, kept for us there whither He hastened. Heaven and earth, time and eternity, past and future, appear now quite different to our eyes, for we are reconciled through Him: our trespass is forgiven, and we are God's pardoned children. *He*, yes, *He* is our peace!

Not what He taught, not His words about the infinite worth of a human soul, of the indispensable necessity to do the will of the Father in heaven, and to walk in that love which hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things; not His words about the Kingdom of God and the righteousness demanded for it much better and much more difficult than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—not any of these is the main thing, the principal thing. Were it the principal thing, then we should be worse off than the Jews, than Israel with its "statutory" law, as one not having rightly conceived the meaning of the idea law might prefer to call it. If it was already difficult to fulfil this "statutory" law, how much more difficult is it to keep the commandments of the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, and thus to acquire the better

righteousness! Or can this so-called "deepening" of the law facilitate its fulfilment? The Lord thinks otherwise. And then as to the trust in God's providence, which is enjoined: "Behold the birds of the heaven, the lilies of the field," yes, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul"—who can accomplish this? Any one who has been given to laudations of Paul Gerhardt's "Commit thou thy ways" and "If God be on my side" should reasonably also know the connection between these and his songs of the passion: "A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth," the "Seven hymns to the members of the Lord Jesus," from the Latin of Saint Bernard, or the hymn, "O world, see, here thy life!" Or is there a connection only in the notion of Paul Gerhardt? Only he can trust in God, be sure of His providence and His guidance and His care, even in the hardest ways and in the darkest hours, who is reconciled with God, has God's mercy, has forgiveness of sins. Who has forgiveness? Forgiveness is a deed of God. Where, when did this deed of God happen? Only in Christ's death and resurrection? But this, says one, is too spectacular; the relation of God to the world is not effectuated in a drama, and it is no drama. Why not? If the natural relation of the world to God is a drama with a tragic ending, why may not the supernatural relation of God to the world be a drama with the glorious finale of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of eternal life? If God, the timeless and spaceless One, should rule the world only in accordance with the eternal law, eternally established by Him, and according to this law once for all provide for its

ongoing, would not the brute forces of the world-order of nature and history crush us? Can God not act? And is not this the greatness of His manifestation, His self-attestation in favor of us sinners, that according to His own eternal counsel He draws near in time to us, who were not created as sinners but became sinners in time, and acts for us and redeems us? Let us by no means through any pale fear of a drama brought about in time, but intended for eternity, lose the fact of the reconciliation and redemption performed through Christ with a love that is timeless, eternal, forever the same, everlastingly transcendent! Or ought Christ to have come only to reveal to the world that the God whom it seeks in all religions and does not find is a God who forever evinces Himself to it with purely pardoning forbearance, friendliness, patience, and love, and whose love it knew not till Christ came, but now, as revealed in Him, it must recognize as the solution of the mystery—of the problem of its existence? Then the testimony of our conscience, our consciousness of guilt under God's judgment, were a false testimony, and the man who in the New Testament still admonishes his readers that "our God is a consuming fire" was wrong.

No, there is nothing more wondrous, nothing less self-understood, nothing more paradoxical, more opposed to all which is logically and morally consistent than the reconciliation, redemption, forgiveness of all our sins, the actual, Divine forgiveness, *imputation of sins and yet forgiveness!* Here are two entirely different religions, opposed to one another and mutually excluding each other. One, as with Christ Himself, connects

forgiveness with His death and resurrection ; in the other one, ~~H~~imself forgives the sin. There are religions excluding each other, of which the one is truly religion, the other only religion so-called. The one mentions the most urgent and permanent interest in the person and work of Christ, in whom it believes and to whom it prays ; the other roundly declares, with Harnack, that Jesus does not belong to the Gospel.

But how is it possible that our pardon, the forgiveness of our sins, depends on one deed, on one event, one happening of the past, in which, as it is said, we were not participants ourselves? That it depends on this deed of the past is evident to every one who for the sake of the suffering and dying of Christ has sought and found forgiveness, to every one who, because of his sins, for the sake of their forgiveness, believes in Jesus, and whom his sins have brought to the feet of Jesus. One does not understand it, but one *has* it ; one would lose everything if it were not true ; yes, one would in very fact lose everything if we had no need to seek the forgiveness of the crucified One on account of our sins ; for the easier the forgiveness the less heavy our sin and guilt, the less also our interest in Christ, our interest in God. There is left, indeed, an interest in polemics against the Christianity through which we seek and find forgiveness by Jesus, but this interest, too, at length will disappear. On the other hand, as soon as we have found forgiveness in the blood of Christ and with it Christ the Savior, the foregoing questions come up again and demand answers, without, indeed, making the fact dependent on the necessity, or absolute correctness, or

fulness of the answers. For it is everywhere true that the facts must first be acknowledged before one understand them or know to establish and combine them, and that one will accept the facts only when they have been understood. The understanding, however, of the truth with which we are concerned here—namely, how our eternal state can be dependent on a fact of the past—is not very difficult. The question is expressed intentionally thus, and not as Lessing has formulated it: how our eternity can be dependent on the *acknowledgment* of a casual historical fact. The question as we put it is more comprehensive, more serious, and yet easier to answer than the other, which, properly speaking, is not to be answered at all, because no one asserts such a thing. That facts of the past which lie far behind us can influence our eternal destiny is manifest to him to whom sin is not a mere result of the growth of humanity out of the dark, natural ground of unconscious existence, but a result of the fall, and who, with Paul, bewails his sinfulness, his carnal manner, and knows that he does sin because of his sinfulness and that he is a child of perdition. But this reference to the sin and guilt of the first created man, which became fatal to the whole race, Harnack, and many with him, would not admit, because they know as history only the rising culture of the human race. Moreover, this question of the inference of a past fact is not yet answered at all with reference to the inquiry how that which happened to Christ is connected with any pardon. For, altho sin is inherited so that only flesh is born of flesh, what business have we to claim a part in the grace which is manifested in this one? And

even if the death of Christ had concerned the entire race belonging to that time, how is it that it also concerns us and every man who comes into the world?

It was God who in Christ reconciled the world to Himself. God—not the thought of God but God Himself—entered, in Christ, into the ordered course of history after He had allowed the world till then to go for centuries and millenniums its own way, and only endured it that it might not perish before the time. It was God who, in pardoning grace, established Himself in the world, who in His eternal Son became present to the world, and since then has remained present. God in Christ has endured that the world should reject Him, and endured it in order to forgive; and thus He showed that His love covers also a multitude of sins. But what God did by uniting Himself with us in His Son, He did to the end that this union and communion might remain forever. This is the one side. The other, however, is this: that humanity, with all its sinful nature, aimed at nothing else than to be *against* God and *without* God, its own God and Lord. All this reached its climax in the rejection of Christ, and thus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all the world which till then had existed. But by living now and on and on, attesting and proving Himself as our Redeemer and Savior, He has to deal ever and ever with the same sinful world, whose sins He suffered and bore. Our sin is not only a similar sin, it is a continuation of the *same* sin. Whether we make ourselves guilty of the same consciously or unconsciously, we can not get rid nor be released from the connection made necessary by the very nature of sin, so that

Christ bore our sin and our guilt also—the sin and guilt of the entire humanity. And so He, the living One, who died through our sin and was raised up through and for the forgiving grace, comes to us and attests to us that our sin—my sin—has brought Him into death, and was borne by Him, and that He brings forgiveness of our sins, of my sins, and that He is our reconciliation, and says to us: “You are [not you shall be] redeemed. Ye were bought with a price!”

Thus He forgave our sins of to-day when He asked the Father to forgive the sins of His murderers: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” As our sin of to-day weighed on Him with the sin of them and with the sin of the whole past world, so from the Cross the stream of forgiveness runs through the world, and one brother may tell it and so attest it to the other, so that he also can believe if he only will, that in Christ we have the redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. God forgave our sins when Christ suffered and died and rose again, and therefore He forgives them to-day to every one who believes in the crucified and risen One, acknowledges Him as the Messiah of God, and therefore as our Redeemer. He feeds upon this salvation and lives in it, and says: “Now, that which Thou, O Lord, didst bear is all my burden! Thou takest upon Thy back the burdens which press me down, Thou bearest my guilt; Thou becomest a curse, in return Thou givest me Thy blessing and placest me into God’s fatherly kindness!”

No one, as yet to this day, and least of all Dr. Harnack, has more clearly expressed the essence of Chris-

tianity than it is expressed in the prayers and hymns of the Church, and more especially in the passion hymns. Christianity, which God consents to offer to the world, is the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ, the justification of the sinner in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ, the redemption of the world through Christ's death and resurrection, the everlasting grace of God in the giving of His Son, of which Jesus says: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Of this says John: "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins"; and Paul: "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; and Peter: "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ, who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times." This unanimous testimony of Jesus and of His apostles the historian and dogmatician may indeed reject as far as the contents are concerned, but he can not contest the fact that it is the testimony of Jesus and of His disciples, and still less that it still works to-day what it worked when it commenced to be proclaimed.

On this account the Christianity which we have and should practise can only consist in the grateful accept-

ance of the reconciliation, the forgiveness of our sins in the blood of Christ, and in the life, struggle, and work, the loving, ministering, and suffering, the hoping and waiting in the power of His grace. This and nothing else can and shall be the Christianity for all times. Whether we have it and practise it, whether we keep it pure—yes, whether we even keep the knowledge of it pure—is another question. Whatever Christianity was when it was proclaimed to the world, and whatever it is and shall be unto the end of days, whether men accept it or not, the opinion on it must be governed by what men have made of it—the nations as well as the theologians. But since the basis of Harnack's doctrine—the answer to the question, What Christianity is in the sense of Christ and of His disciples—is so poor, his understanding of the resultant question—What the Church has made of it—becomes the poorer, and his whole attempt as a historian to sublimate the essence of Christianity from the historical appearance of the Church must be designated as wrong. It is the more preposterous since, just as in the Christian his Christianity and the testimony of his life very slightly coincide, so, also, in the Church the essence and appearance of Church, and, therefore, the essence and appearance of Christianity, never coincide. Twice, perhaps, do they coincide—at the beginning and at the end of history. But how early the struggle with sin, and therefore of sin against Christianity, commenced, and what intensity it can still assume, the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolic Epistles show. On this account we must make clear and ever clearer to ourselves what the essence of Christianity is; we must,

therefore, historically and dogmatically, if we must call it so, go back to the beginning—not, however, make history a judge between the transient and the lasting, as Strauss in his time endeavored to do, and as Harnack in his manner has now also endeavored.

It would be profitable to enter into Harnack's historical picture and to estimate and correct it. But for the present we must postpone this task, and shall now only present to ourselves two things. One is, that the knowledge of Christianity, the understanding of the Gospel as the offering of the real, present, existing gift of God, was lost in connection with the missionary problem of the Church and the education of the nations, altho the longing for it remained alive here and there, and the faith, tho troubled, sought for itself a place and sometimes found it, till God, in the hour of greatest need, raised up His servant Luther, who declared unto us again the Gospel of a present grace experienced by him of the Son of God who died and rose for us. The other is a word coming from Harnack himself: "How often in history is theology only the means to set aside religion!" Of Jesus, however, it is true that He alone and truly has made religion possible to us, for in Him we have a free, open access unto the Father through His blood, through the forgiveness of sins!





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